

THE LAST PESHWA  
AND THE ENGLISH COMMISSIONERS

1818—1851

# THE LAST PESHWA AND THE ENGLISH COMMISSIONERS

1818-1851

BY  
PRATUL C. GUPTA  
M.A.(Cal.), PH.D.(Lond.)

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BAJI RAO II AND THE EAST INDIA COMPANY  
1796-1818

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TO DR. SURENDRANATH SEN



## PREFACE

The following pages contain a study of Baji Rao's life in exile. In *Baji Rao II and the East India Company*, published five years ago, I traced the story of the last Peshwa till 1818 when he lost his Peshwaship and surrendered to the English. In the present volume, the story is brought down to 1851, when he died. In a sense, it is a continuation of my previous work, but it is quite an independent volume and may be read as such.

For some time I was working on the historical materials of Baji Rao's later life, and I thought that the story of the Peshwa's life at Bithur might be of some interest. Incidentally, the book contains accounts of a number of the East India Company's servants. Except one or two, they are hardly remembered, but they did fairly useful work for the Company, and posterity might like to know a little about them. It is unfortunate that one does not get enough Marathi materials which would have added greater interest to this account.

My grateful acknowledgements are due to the Director of Archives, Government of India; the Keeper of Records, India Office Library and the Keeper of Records, Bombay Record Office for allowing me to use the materials in their custody. Professor Somnath Maitra has very kindly read the manuscript before it was sent to the press. I must express my obligation for much kindness and help to Dr. N. K. Sinha, Messrs. Nirmalchandra Sinha, Radhamohan Bhattacharyya and Pulinbihari Sen.

P.C.G.

125, Rashbehari Avenue,  
Calcutta.

12 August, 1944.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	v
I. THE PESHWA AT BITHUR	1
II. JOHN LOW	22
III. E. J. JOHNSON	30
IV. WILLIAM PERCY COOKE	36
V. JAMES MANSON	47
VI. BENGAL REGULATION I OF 1832	68
VII. THE LAST DAYS	87
INDEX	III

All documents referred to in this volume are from the Imperial Record Department, New Delhi, except where otherwise stated. Bombay Secretariat Records are indicated as B.R.O. and India Office Records as I.O.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PESHWA AT BITHUR

On the 5th November, 1817, Peshwa Baji Rao II attacked the Company's troops stationed at Kirki in the suburb of Poona, and the Maratha War began. In May, next year, he decided to give up the struggle. He sent a letter to General Malcolm in which he stated that his "family" were "the friends of the Company for two generations", and it was his "wish that this friendship" should "continue and increase henceforward".<sup>1</sup> Malcolm replied that the wisest thing he could do was to make immediate submission, and laid down six propositions as preliminaries to surrender. After some hesitation Baji Rao agreed, and gave himself up to the English on the 3rd June, 1818.<sup>2</sup>

The following were the terms accepted by Baji Rao :

1. Baji Rao must "resign for himself and successors all right, title and claim over the Government of Poona", or to any sovereign power.

2. Baji Rao should come with his family and a small number of followers to Malcolm's camp who would send him to Benares or any other suitable place that the Governor-General might "at his request fix for his residence".

3. Baji Rao should "proceed to Hindoosthan without one day's delay".

4. Baji Rao should receive a liberal pension from the British Government. Malcolm promised that it should not be less than eight lakhs of rupees per annum.

5. Baji Rao's recommendation for "Brahmins of venerable character", religious establishments supported by his family, and old adherents who had been "ruined by their attachment to him" should be treated with regard.

<sup>1</sup> Sec. Cons. 12 June, 1818 (17).

<sup>2</sup> Sec. Cons. 26 June, 1818 (78).

6. Baji Rao must come to Malcolm's camp within twenty-four hours, otherwise hostilities would be resumed and no further negotiations would be entered into with him.<sup>3</sup>

Preparations were immediately made for Baji Rao's journey to the North. Baji Rao requested Malcolm that his assistant, Lieutenant John Low, be allowed to accompany him to Hindusthan. Accordingly Low was ordered to escort the ex-Peshwa to his destination.<sup>4</sup> As the rains had already set in, and there was political unrest in the Central Provinces, it was considered inexpedient to cross the Narmada and the route through Bundelkhand was rejected.<sup>5</sup> Baji Rao was to proceed to Ajmere through Rajputana and then move towards Delhi or any other place that would be deemed suitable.<sup>6</sup>

The question of Baji Rao's permanent residence was discussed while he was proceeding to the North. Baji Rao at first favoured the idea of residing at Benares, and Malcolm on his part did nothing to discourage this intention. He believed that "the prospect of visiting and remaining at that sacred city" might render the Peshwa less difficult, and he also thought that "to deny him the solace in his banishment would be to outrage that religious feeling which may . . . be expected . . . to reconcile him to his great reverse of fortune".<sup>7</sup> It seems from Baji Rao's subsequent conduct that he had come to expect Benares to be his future residence. On the 8th July, the Governor-General's secretary Adam wrote to Malcolm, "It does not appear that any distinct promise has been made . . . but . . . Bajee Row has had sufficient grounds for indulging in an expectation that he will be permitted to reside at Benares".<sup>8</sup> Lord Hastings, the Governor-General, was

<sup>3</sup> Sec. Cons. 26 June, 1818 (76).

<sup>4</sup> Bom. Pol. Pro. 26 Aug., 1818 p. 4898, I.O.

<sup>5</sup> Sec. Pro. 24 July, 1818 (22).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Bom. Pol. Pro. 26 Aug., 1818 p. 4898, I.O.

<sup>7</sup> Sec. Cons. 24 July, 1818 (22).

<sup>8</sup> Sec. Cons. 24 July, 1818 (24).

opposed to the idea of sending Baji Rao to Benares,<sup>9</sup> and Malcolm himself was conscious "of the great inconvenience and perhaps hazard of allowing a prince of such rank and name to settle at Benares or any other Hindoo city".<sup>10</sup> Benares was finally rejected, and in September, while John Low was proceeding towards Shapur, he had various occasions to discuss the question of his future residence with Baji Rao and his agents. Baji Rao had not yet given up all hopes of residing at Benares, but had lost much of his former preference for that city, on account of reports of the climate of the place which he believed to be unsuitable, and the presence of numerous Marathas there who would always expect pecuniary assistance from him.<sup>11</sup> Low was under the impression that Baji Rao, on the whole, would prefer Bithur to Benares.<sup>12</sup> The other places recommended by Low and rejected by Baji Rao were Monghyr and Gorakhpur. Baji Rao's agent Ramchandra reported to Low that the ex-Peshwa had always "lived in one of the finest climates of the world, and the heat of Mongheer would kill him."<sup>13</sup> Gorakhpur was objected to because there were "no temples of great sanctity" in the neighbourhood.<sup>14</sup> The place which Baji Rao next suggested as his permanent residence was Mathura,<sup>15</sup> and in case the Governor-General disapproved of it, he was willing to reside within one day's journey of the town. The place offered him excellent opportunities of passing his time in religious ceremonies.<sup>16</sup> The Governor-General however, was opposed to Baji Rao's choice of Mathura. He was unwilling to let him stay near the British frontier where he would have chances of "frequent communication with designing men".<sup>17</sup>

In October, the Governor-General came to a decision, and informed Low that he had selected Bithur, near

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.<sup>10</sup> Sec. Cons. 24 July, 1818 (22).<sup>11</sup> Sec. Pol. Diary, 2 Dec., 1818. B.R.O.<sup>12</sup> Ibid.<sup>15</sup> Ibid.<sup>13</sup> Ibid.<sup>16</sup> Ibid.<sup>14</sup> Ibid.<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Cawnpore, as the ex-Peshwa's permanent residence.<sup>18</sup> Low was at first under the impression that though Baji Rao had made certain complaints against the climate of Bithur he had no positive dislike for the place.<sup>19</sup> But later on his agents Ramchandra and Anna Deshmukh paid a visit to Low, and explained to him Baji Rao's objections to Bithur. Baji Rao had heard such bad reports about the climate of places on the banks of the Ganges and particularly of Bithur, that he begged that the Governor-General should reconsider his decision, and let him stay at any place on the Jumna except near its confluence with the Ganges. He was prepared even to stay at Delhi which he described as a "second Calcutta", completely under British control, and inhabited largely by his enemies, the Muhammadans.<sup>20</sup> A few days later, Low had an interview with Baji Rao in which the ex-Peshwa protested against the Governor-General's decision, and pointed out that if he stayed on the banks of the Ganges, as a good Brahmin he would have to take his bath in the river every morning, which would certainly injure his health.<sup>21</sup> He asked Low to communicate to the Governor-General his request that Bithur should not be finally fixed up until "he had seen the place and tried the climate a few days".<sup>22</sup> Low informed the Governor-General of Baji Rao's prayer, but continued his march down the Doab, as arranged, and proceeded towards Bithur. The Governor-General did not take Baji Rao's opposition seriously. He considered his objections 'frivolous', and pointed out that Bithur offered "so many advantages both in a public point of view and with reference to Baji Rao's convenience and the indulgence of his devotional habits", that he found no reason to alter his decision. Bithur had long been used as a station

<sup>18</sup> Poona Residency Inwards, 1819, vol. 58/101. Low to Adam.  
<sup>22</sup> Dec., 1818. B.R.O.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Poona Residency Inwards, 1819, vol. 58/101. Low to Adam.  
<sup>22</sup> Dec., 1818. B.R.O.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

of the district of Cawnpore, and the Governor-General thought that it could not be an unhealthy place.<sup>23</sup> But it should be mentioned that the town of Cawnpore, about eight miles from Bithur, was notorious for its unsuitable climate. Bishop Heber who visited the place in 1824, mentioned that he "had heard a very unfavourable account" of the climate of Cawnpore which was not, however, "confirmed by the residents".<sup>24</sup>

Baji Rao arrived at Bithur in February, 1819, and resided there till 1851, when he died. His life was one of comparative oblivion. Under restrictions such as were imposed on him, and cut off like him, from their own country, greater men would have lost their importance; and the ex-Peshwa accepted the inevitable. He adjusted himself to the changed circumstances, and became a suppliant to the British Government. It is an interesting study to note the gradual transformation of the Peshwa's mind, and the change of the British attitude towards him. Slowly the ex-Peshwa ceased to be dangerous. He became just a pensioner like many other Indian chiefs without any power of mischief, and as he lived very long he began to appear as almost a burden on the Company.

It is a pity that one does not get enough Marathi materials for writing an intimate account of the Peshwa's life in exile. Baji Rao's palaces at Bithur were destroyed in the Mutiny, and whatever historical papers there were must have perished. Among the Commissioners, there was none who left private records of his life and of his transactions with the ex-Peshwa. Except John Low, they were not men of any great merit. Their private communications or diaries have not been published. It is difficult to say if they cared to leave records of the ex-Peshwa's daily life. Whatever materials we have, are found in the official transactions between the Governor-

<sup>23</sup> Poona Residency Inwards, 1819, vol. 58/101. Adam to Low. 9 Jan., 1819. B.R.O.

<sup>24</sup> Heber, *Narrative of a Journey*, i, p. 366.



General and the Commissioners. They contain very useful information, but naturally they do not deal with intimate details of the ex-Peshwa's life in exile.

At the time of Baji Rao's surrender, he had with him the remnant of his broken army. On the 7th June, 1818, Malcolm estimated the army accompanying Baji Rao to his camp "between 3 and 4000 horse and 2 or 3000 infantry" of which about 1200 were Arabs.<sup>25</sup> Some more Arabs soon joined Baji Rao and their number became nearly 2000.<sup>26</sup> But Baji Rao's Arab infantry and Rohillas soon deserted him after an attempt at mutiny for arrears of pay.<sup>27</sup> Some of the Maratha troops also left the ex-Peshwa and melted away. During his march to Malwa, Malcom wrote that he was "daily getting rid of Badgee Rao's followers".<sup>28</sup> On the 12th June, he informed the Governor-General that he had "granted passports within the last five days to upwards of 8000 of his followers".<sup>29</sup> On the 19th June, Malcolm estimated that "the whole of his present followers" consisted "of about 1000 very indifferent Horse and 250 Foot". The latter were "mere guards of his baggage" and of the cavalry only 300 were his personal employees. Malcolm hoped that the rest would be "destroyed or go away themselves".<sup>30</sup> It was understood that Baji Rao would be allowed "to retain no troops excepting such guards" as might be absolutely necessary. The number of these men must have been very small. In 1833, the Government found it necessary to enlist and train about fifty armed watchmen for keeping out the robbers.<sup>31</sup> But the civil population at Bithur was considerable. Baji Rao was reputed to be a very orthodox Brahmin. As he had always spent large sums of money

<sup>25</sup> Sec. Cons. 10 July, 1818 (19).

<sup>26</sup> *Narrative of Badgeerao's Surrender*, p. CCXIV. Prinsep, *Political and Military Transactions*, p. 399.

<sup>27</sup> Sec. Cons. 24 July, 1818 (22).

<sup>28</sup> Kaye, *Life of Malcolm*, ii, p. 267.

<sup>29</sup> Sec. Cons. 26 June, 1818 (23).

<sup>30</sup> Sec. Cons. 24 July, 1818 (22).

<sup>31</sup> Pol. Cons. 27 Feb., 1833 (57; 58).

on religious festivals and charity, a large number of Brahmins flocked to Bithur and were fed and looked after by him. The Commissioner prepared a memorandum of the inhabitants within the ex-Peshwa's jagir, and of his followers residing within the town of Bithur. It shows that in December, 1837, the number of people in the jagir amounted to 7132 persons including children and a body of "500 sowers and 450 sepahis". Baji Rao's followers living in the town of Bithur outside the jagir, numbered 2265 which included 100 horse and 750 sipahis.<sup>32</sup> In 1847, the population in the jagir was estimated at about 15,000 persons.<sup>33</sup>

Among those who came and settled with the ex-Peshwa at Bithur, mention may be made of his five followers, Subedar Ramchandra Pant, Bapu Godebole, Anna Desmukh, Baloba Baba and Bhikaji Pant. Ramchandra was supposed to get a salary of eight thousand rupees, and Anna Desmukh and Baloba Baba one thousand rupees, every month.<sup>34</sup> Baji Rao's common followers also depended entirely on small monthly allowances. They were never regularly paid, and they were always in financial difficulties. Low was not exaggerating when he stated that these men "who held civil and military situations in the Deccan . . . have now no means of living but an irregularly paid monthly salary of forty or fifty rupees and a few pieces of indifferent clothes and shawls, three or four times per annum presented to them at the principal Hindoo festivals. This scanty subsistence too, they know to a certain degree dependent on our concurrence, in as much as they have often been told that the Commissioner would be ordered to insist upon the dismissal of any of the followers whose conduct might be obnoxious to the British Government".<sup>35</sup> In 1824, Ramchandra and others applied

<sup>32</sup> Pol. Cons. 4 April, 1838 (85).

<sup>33</sup> Pol. Cons. 6 Nov., 1847 (207).

<sup>34</sup> Pol. Cons. 17 Dec., 1824 (63).

<sup>35</sup> Poona Diary, 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Low's Memorandum, 15 July, 1821. B.R.O.

to the Government that some provision might be made for them "independent of the previous support which they . . . derived solely from their chief."<sup>36</sup> Their case was considered in a letter written by Low to the Governor-General on the 30th October, 1825. They were divided into several classes. Low considered Ramchandra "entitled to the largest amount" and recommended him to a pension of one thousand rupees a month. Anna Desmukh and Bapu Godebole were placed next in the list, and recommended a pension of three hundred and fifty rupees each. Baloba Baba and Bhikaji Pant belonged to the third group, and were each to receive a pension of two hundred and fifty rupees. Low further proposed that this pension should have retrospective effect and commence at a period not later than Baji Rao's arrival at Bithur in February, 1819.<sup>37</sup>

Ramchandra Pant was formerly a subedar in the Carnatic. His official designation stuck to him even after the loss of the Peshwa's empire. During the late war with the English he had commanded 5000 horse and fought against the English at Salpa.<sup>38</sup> At Bithur he became Baji Rao's general manager and continued to hold this post till his master's death in 1851. He exercised "great and well directed influence over his master's mind", and his services were considered "by far the most important and useful" to the British interests.<sup>39</sup> On the eve of his transfer from Bithur, Low gave him, at his request, a testimonial of his "services and conduct", in which he spoke highly of Ramchandra as "a most zealous and effective instrument in preventing political intrigues between Bajee Rao and other chiefs, and in regulating the Maharaja's conduct in all respects in the manner most desired by the British Government." Ramchandra was

<sup>36</sup> Pol. Cons. 17 Dec., 1824 (63).

<sup>37</sup> Foreign Miscellaneous, letter dated 30 Oct., 1825. Ramchandra also continued to receive one lakh of rupees annually from the ex-Peshwa.

<sup>38</sup> *Peshwa Daftar*, 41 (153-54).

<sup>39</sup> Foreign Miscellaneous, letter dated 30 Oct., 1825.

also praised for having "always shown a laudable attachment to the master, and an anxiety to benefit him to the utmost of his power, consistently with his engagements" to the British Government.<sup>40</sup> Low specially mentioned Ramchandra Pant's "efficient aid" on account of which he was able to secure from the ex-Peshwa a sum of six lakhs of rupees as loan to the Company.<sup>41</sup> But the part Ramchandra played in arranging this loan did not help to make him popular with his master. It must have needed a good deal of persuasion, and Baji Rao probably would have refused it if he were in a position to do so. On the 31st October, 1825, Low informed the Government that there was little chance of securing more loans from the ex-Peshwa "for a considerable period". He had "distinctly requested" Low "to state that he could not for some time make it convenient to spare any more for the loan".<sup>42</sup> Two years after, however, he was "induced to subscribe a further sum of three lacs of Rupees to the Government loan".<sup>43</sup> These Government loans adversely affected Ramchandra Pant's relations with Baji Rao. He made an application to the Company for some pecuniary assistance, and represented that Baji Rao did not consider Ramchandra "to have acted friendly towards him in the matter of the Government loans" and that he could not expect any help from him.<sup>44</sup> Probably he was temporarily out of favour.

But whatever might have been Baji Rao's attitude towards his Dewan on these occasions, it does not seem to have caused much anxiety to Ramchandra. On the other hand, he was amply compensated by the bounty of the British Government. In 1823, on the occasion of the marriage of one of his sons, he applied to the Government

<sup>40</sup> *Itihas Sangraha*, 1912-13. (Aitihasik Sphuta-lekha, pp. 15-16).

Pol. Cons. 24 Sept., 1852 (158).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Pol. Cons. 30 Nov., 1827 (53).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Pol. Cons. 13 March, 1829 (42).

for "some pecuniary aid towards defraying the expenses" of the ceremony.<sup>45</sup> The Government readily consented, and instructed the Commissioner to pay him twenty thousand rupees.<sup>46</sup> Similar grants were made to the subedar on other occasions, till Lord Bentinck's financial reforms put an end to all such acts of generosity. In 1829, when Ramchandra informed the Commissioner of another ceremony in his house, and his "expectation to receive the same pecuniary assistance as was extended to him on former similar occasions", the Government was reluctant to make any grant. The Commissioner was instructed to "distinctly discourage such expectations".<sup>47</sup>

When Manson became the Commissioner in 1831, he also placed a very high value on the services rendered by Ramchandra. In his periodical report on Bithur in 1838, he gave a very good character to the Dewan. "During the six years I have been Commissioner here", Manson wrote, "Ramchandra has on all occasions maintained, in my opinion, the high character bestowed on him by Colonel Low in the faithful discharge of his duties, both to his immediate master Baji Rao, as well as to the British Government; and it is to his zeal, discretion and able management that I attribute the general tranquillity which (with some exceptions) prevailed among the Maharajah's followers. . . ."<sup>48</sup> One feels, however, that it was pretty difficult even for Ramchandra to serve two masters with conflicting interests. In 1839, there was a conspiracy, apparently to remove Baji Rao from Bithur. Nothing against Baji Rao could be proved, and he denied to Ramchandra "all knowledge of the designs" of the conspirators. But Ramchandra and Manson had "but one opinion as to Baji Rao being fully aware of what was transacting".<sup>49</sup> Manson probably had good reasons for

<sup>45</sup> Pol. Cons. 9 May, 1823 (120).

<sup>46</sup> Pol. Cons. 22 Aug., 1823 (28).

<sup>47</sup> Pol. Pro. 13 March, 1829 (43).

<sup>48</sup> Pol. Cons. 4 April, 1838 (82).

<sup>49</sup> Sec. Pro. 3 July, 1829 (85).

his belief, but it is surprising to find Ramchandra Pant sharing it. He was the ex-Peshwa's servant, and should have been more in the confidence of his master than of the English Commissioner. He was perhaps too anxious to prove his loyalty to the Company.

The other pensioners of the Government played less important parts, and are much less frequently mentioned in the official papers. Baloba Baba, who belonged to a very respectable family and was highly spoken of by Elphinstone, could not be of any service, as he was too old and in failing health. He resided "almost entirely in Benares", but maintained a karkun at Bithur and one hundred horse in Baji Rao's service.<sup>50</sup> Bhikaji Pant was also in poor health and "thrown out of his former degree of influence".<sup>51</sup> Low considered Anna Desmukh and Bapu Godebole as "the most leading and useful" persons next to Ramchandra.<sup>52</sup>

Though sufficient details are lacking, one may imagine that a considerable portion of the ex-Peshwa's time and of his Dewan was spent in hearing cases and deciding disputes among the Marathas. The religious ceremonies and the feeding of the Brahmins, were a common occurrence. Occasionally, Baji Rao was allowed to visit places of religious interest in northern India, and he stayed away for months together. He went on pilgrimage to Mathura in 1823, and at different times he visited, among other places, Allahabad, Benares and Gaya. Baji Rao built a palace for himself at Bithur which he decorated lavishly, and there he entertained his friends and the Europeans in the neighbourhood.<sup>53</sup> Whatever might have been Baji Rao's grievances about the terms of his surrender, the British Government never stinted him money, and Baji Rao spent a portion of his huge income in public works at Bithur and elsewhere. In March, 1827, the Governor-

<sup>50</sup> Foreign Miscellaneous, letter dated 30 Oct., 1825.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *Itihas Sangraha*, 1912-13. (*Aitihasik Sphuta-lekha*, p. 18).

General permitted him to convey 40,000 stones from Mirzapur and 5000 rupees' worth of wood from Patna for the construction of a temple, a ghat, a house for priests at Benares, and also one thousand rupees' worth of stones from Mirzapore for a temple which he was about to build at Bithur. It was considered "the most desirable way in which he could spend his income", and Baji Rao was allowed to obtain his requirements free of duty.<sup>54</sup>

In all matters concerning the ex-Peshwa and his adherents, the Commissioner was responsible. He had his office and residence at Bithur, and was required to maintain close contact with the royal pensioner. During the period of thirty-two years that Baji Rao lived at Bithur, there were four permanent officers holding this post. They were John Low, E. J. Johnson, William Cooke and James Manson. When the Commissioner went on leave or there was delay in appointing a new one, it was the practice to requisition the services of an officer from Cawnpore; or, sometimes, the magistrate of Cawnpore carried on the Commissioner's duties in addition to his own. Low, who accompanied the ex-Peshwa to Bithur, was appointed the first Commissioner. He worked till January, 1822, and then went on leave for reasons of health. Captain Blacker officiated for about one year, and in the beginning of 1823, Captain Johnson succeeded him as the acting Commissioner. Low returned in 1825, but was almost immediately transferred to Jaipur. Johnson continued as the acting Commissioner till the 15th January, 1826, when he delivered over the charge to Grote, the magistrate of Cawnpore.<sup>55</sup> Johnson again took charge on the 3rd May, and on the 20th June, was appointed the permanent Commissioner.<sup>56</sup> On the 1st November, 1828, Johnson took leave for about a month. It was considered unnecessary that the magistrate of Cawnpore should be appointed formally as the acting Commissioner for such a

<sup>54</sup> Pol. Pro. 16 March, 1827 (51, 52).

<sup>55</sup> Pol. Pro. 7 April, 1826 (45).

<sup>56</sup> Pol. Pro. 26 May, 1826 (50) ; 7 July, 1826 (48).



short period, but he was requested "to afford his advice and assistance", if required by the ex-Peshwa during the Commissioner's absence.<sup>57</sup> Johnson did not return to Bithur, and on the 15th January, 1829, Bacon, the magistrate of Cawnpore, also went on leave, leaving the management of the Commissioner's office to Oldfield, the judge of Cawnpore.<sup>58</sup> These temporary arrangements did not prove very successful. Ramchandra Pant pressed the Government for the nomination of a successor to Johnson, and Oldfield also wrote to the Political department on the 31st January, that he was "quite unable to attend in person" at Bithur, and that the duties of the Commissioner could not be conducted properly unless the Commissioner resided "at the spot".<sup>59</sup> Bacon's return put an end to Oldfield's difficulties. In June, 1829, Bacon was transferred from Cawnpore, and on the 3rd June, the charge of the Commissioner was taken up by his successor Irwin.<sup>60</sup> On the 16th January, 1830, William Percy Cooke was appointed Commissioner, but he died in July next year.<sup>61</sup> Thompson, the magistrate of Cawnpore, took over charge for a few days. From the 6th August, 1831, Major Faithful officiated as the Commissioner till the appointment of Manson in November, 1831. Manson was the fourth and the last Commissioner. He continued till Baji Rao's death in 1851, when the office was abolished.<sup>62</sup>

The Commissioner maintained a modest establishment. In the earlier days there was an assistant Commissioner. John Low's brother William Low acted as his assistant till 1820. He was then succeeded by Captain Blacker. When Low was transferred, the post of the assistant Commissioner seems to have been abolished. The Commissioner's

<sup>57</sup> Pol. Pro. 3 Oct., 1828 (16).

<sup>58</sup> Pol. Pro. 26 Dec., 1828 (35, 36).

<sup>59</sup> Pol. Pro. 25 Sept., 1829 (48).

<sup>60</sup> Pol. Pro. 1 May, 1829 (53); 19 June, 1829 (79).

<sup>61</sup> Pol. Pro. 29 Jan., 1830 (41); 29 July, 1830 (111).

<sup>62</sup> Pol. Pro. 2 Sept., 1831 (123); 18 Nov., 1831 (85). After Baji Rao's death, Morland acted as Commissioner for a short period.



staff consisted of an English writer, a treasurer, a Maratha pandit and a munshi for Persian correspondence. It is interesting to note that the English writer's post, in 1829, was held by a Bengali named Nabakishan Mitra.<sup>63</sup> He was one of those English-speaking Bengalis who in those days followed the progress of the Company's arms in northern India. Taking advantage of Irwin's inexperience, he embezzled one thousand rupees from the Commissioner's office and fled. He was subsequently arrested and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment by the Commissioner of Circuit.<sup>64</sup> Four other writers are mentioned in the records of the Commissioners. Their names and their scale of pay suggest that they were Eurasians. In 1824, the post was occupied by Da Costa.<sup>65</sup> During Cooke's period of service one Mosley was appointed as the writer. But on account of malpractices he was forced to resign.<sup>66</sup> The Commissioners do not seem to have had any luck with their writers. MacCarty who was probably the next choice also proved unfortunate. He was implicated in an intrigue with Baji Rao's agent, and was consequently dismissed from service.<sup>67</sup> Martindale, who was the English writer at the time of Baji Rao's death, was highly spoken of by the Commissioner. He had worked for more than eight years, and when the Commissioner's office was abolished, he was given a job in the magistrate's office at Cawnpore.<sup>68</sup>

In the earlier days, there was a medical officer attached to the Commissioner's office. But in 1828, he was removed,<sup>69</sup> probably for economic reasons, and there was no proper medical establishment at Bithur. In October, 1828, the Governor-General decided, as a temporary

<sup>63</sup> Pol. Pro. 3 Dec., 1832 (114).

<sup>64</sup> Pol. Pro. 19 Feb., 1830 (53). Pol. Cons. 3 Dec., 1832 (115).

<sup>65</sup> Pol. Pro. 7 May, 1824 (36).

<sup>66</sup> Pol. Pro. 23 May, 1836 (159).

<sup>67</sup> Pol. Pro. 4 April, 1838 (82).

<sup>68</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (8, 9).

<sup>69</sup> Pol. Pro. 18 July, 1828 (44).

measure, that the civil surgeon at Cawnpore should "afford medical assistance" to the Commissioner and his establishment, as far as might be "practicable consistently with his other duties". He was granted an allowance of one hundred rupees a month.<sup>70</sup>

It seems that a practice had grown up of regarding the civil surgeon as the medical officer "of Maharajah Bajee Rao's camp" also.<sup>71</sup> But the Governor-General disliked it, and the Commissioner was informed that the Government did not "profess to furnish medical assistance, gratuitously, to the Maharajah and his followers, and that if desirous of obtaining the advice and attendance of a medical officer, they must make their own arrangements".<sup>72</sup> In 1830, an application was made to the Governor-General for the "entertainment of a native doctor" for the guard and establishment attached to the Commissioner.<sup>73</sup> A "native doctor" was appointed; but, in 1837, he got himself implicated in a plot to poison the Commissioner and Baji Rao's Dewan Ramchandra.<sup>74</sup>

The Commissioner's means of protection were two Rissalas of irregular horse, and a party of sepoys. The duties of the mounted troops consisted chiefly in escorting the treasure required for payment to Baji Rao every month, and in "furnishing several small guards about the camp". In 1823, after some discussion, the Government decided that "it would not be expedient to make any reduction of the strength of that party".<sup>75</sup> But next year the Government changed its mind, and one of the Rissalas was ordered to return to its headquarters.<sup>76</sup> Five years later, the remaining Rissala of irregular horse was with-

<sup>70</sup> Pol. Pro. 17 Oct., 1828 (42).

<sup>71</sup> Pol. Pro. 5 March, 1830 (84).

<sup>72</sup> Pol. Pro. 5 March, 1830 (85).

<sup>73</sup> Pol. Pro. 5 March, 1830 (85).

<sup>74</sup> Pol. Pro. 16 April, 1830 (115).

<sup>75</sup> Pol. Pro. 4 April, 1838 (82).

<sup>76</sup> Pol. Pro. 4 July, 1823 (45).

<sup>77</sup> Pol. Pro. 7 May, 1824 (35).

drawn.<sup>77</sup> As this step had been taken probably solely on financial grounds, no arrangements was made "to replace them with any other troops", but the Commissioner was directed to inform the Government should any difficulty arise out of it.<sup>78</sup> The withdrawal of the horse proved very inconvenient, and the Commissioner was compelled to request "the favour of a few *sowers* from Baji Rao" for attending on him on ceremonial occasions and for bringing the *dawk* from Cawnpore.<sup>79</sup> In February, 1830, Cooke prayed for a "small party of horse" to be posted at Bithur, in addition to the company of infantry.<sup>80</sup> The same request was repeated by Major Faithful next year, when he applied for a party of thirty irregular horse.<sup>81</sup> In 1833, Major Manson considered that "a party of 25/30 irregular horse would at all times" be useful at Bithur.<sup>82</sup> Apart from the inconvenience, it was pointed out by the Commissioners that Baji Rao might impute a "personal disrespect involved in the removal of the horse for a period of upwards of ten years";<sup>83</sup> and that in the case of any disturbance he had "not a single horseman on whose fidelity he could depend".<sup>84</sup> The Governor-General, however, saw no reason to provide a mounted escort at Bithur. He considered that Baji Rao's own troops should be deemed sufficient for his own protection, and that it lay in the Commissioner's power to "recommend His Highness to employ persons" whom he could trust.<sup>85</sup>

The Commissioner's establishment did not cost the Government much. But during Lord Bentinck's financial reforms, drastic cuts were made and the salary of the staff reduced. The Commissioner's salary and military pay

<sup>77</sup> Pol. Pro. 24 July, 1829 (36).

<sup>78</sup> Pol. Pro. 24 July, 1829 (37).

<sup>79</sup> Pol. Pro. 5 March, 1830 (64).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Pol. Pro. 9 Dec., 1831 (41).

<sup>82</sup> Pol. Pro. 21 Nov., 1833 (103).

<sup>83</sup> Pol. Pro. 9 Dec., 1831 (40).

<sup>84</sup> Pol. Pro. 21 Nov., 1833 (103).

<sup>85</sup> Pol. Pro. 21 Nov., 1833 (104).

were reduced, and a saving was made to the amount of Rs. 689 and as. 4 every month.<sup>86</sup> When Manson succeeded Cooke in 1831, he was receiving only one thousand rupees as his monthly salary.<sup>87</sup> On being asked if the office of the treasurer might be abolished or if any reduction in the establishment might be made, Johnson, who was then the Commissioner, replied that he could not "reduce it to any considerable extent without compromising in some degree its efficiency", and prayed that he might be allowed to retain the post of the treasurer. The Commissioner explained that he was almost hourly "receiving written communications not only from the Maharajah, but from his adherents", and the treasurer and Pandit was the only person who could "read, write, and speak the Mahratta language".<sup>88</sup> An arrangement was finally arrived at. The joint office of the treasurer and Maratha Pandit with its monthly salary of two hundred rupees was abolished, but the same person was retained as the Maratha Pandit on a salary of one hundred rupees a month. The Governor-General felt that there was "no sufficient occasion for the services of a Persian Munshi at Rupees Forty per mensem", and consequently the post was ordered to be abolished.<sup>89</sup> Ten rupees were deducted from the pay of the Jamadar of the Harkara, and six Harkaras with a pay of six rupees each were struck off.<sup>90</sup> In all, a monthly saving of eight hundred and thirty-five rupees and four annas was effected. In 1843, further retrenchments were projected. But the Commissioner replied that it did not appear to him "feasible to effect any further reduction" in his establishment after the revision it underwent during Lord Bentinck's administration.<sup>91</sup> So no further reduction appears to have been made. On the other hand, the post of the Munshi, probably abolished in 1828, was revived

<sup>86</sup> Pol. Pro. 19 April, 1843 (163).

<sup>87</sup> Pol. Pro. 26 May, 1849 (52).

<sup>88</sup> Pol. Pro. 27 June, 1828 (96, 97); 1 Aug., 1828 (43).

<sup>89</sup> Pol. Pro. 1 Aug., 1828 (44).

<sup>90</sup> Pol. Pro. 19 April, 1843 (163).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

during Manson's term of office. At the time of Baji Rao's death, there was one Munshi Ashik Ali attached to the Commissioner's office, who used to draw a salary of forty rupees a month.<sup>92</sup>

It was the Commissioner's chief duty to keep watch over the ex-Peshwa, but he was also expected to look after the welfare of the numerous Marathas at Bithur, with as little interference as possible. The appointment of Low was a very happy choice. He managed to soothe the feelings of Baji Rao, and successfully tided over the most difficult period of Baji Rao's life in retirement. It probably took him a long time to be reconciled to his change of fortune, but Low's sympathy and tact helped a great deal. A man with less imagination would have found a more difficult and stubborn Peshwa to deal with. In spite of conflicting interests, a bond of friendship grew up between the two. A few years after Low had left Bithur he saw Baji Rao again. "He even shed tears", Low wrote about this meeting to his mother, and "when taking leave . . . he prayed the Supreme Being to make me a Brahmin in the next change in this world, and that I should in due time be absorbed in the Deity".<sup>93</sup> One reads with amusement how Baji Rao's show of affection sometimes caused a great deal of embarrassment to the Commissioners. According to the regulations of the Government, presents offered to the Commissioners were not to be retained by them but passed on to the credit of the Company. Baji Rao insisted, in 1825, that he would present a khilat worth four or five thousand rupees to "Captain Low as a private friend" which he was "to keep as his own property". Low was then about to proceed to Jaipur. As a way out of the difficulty he suggested that the acting Commissioner should defer "announcing the refusal of the Government", until he should be permanently appointed at Jaipur.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Pol. Pro. 3 Oct., 1851 (8).

<sup>93</sup> Low, *Fifty Years with John Company*, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Foreign Miscellaneous, letter dated 29 Oct., 1825.

When Dewan Ramchandra also was "extremely desirous" that Low should accept a token of friendship from him, Low "settled" it by exchanging his gold watch for that of the Dewan.<sup>95</sup> A similar attempt was made to present a khilat to Major Blacker.<sup>96</sup> It was Cooke who was prevailed upon to keep some presents from Ramchandra pending the reply of the Government, and was rebuked by the Governor-General for his conduct.<sup>97</sup> As a token of friendship of the British Government, a practice had grown up of making small presents to Baji Rao's servants on the occasion of the principal festivals of the year. A memorandum of the year 1827 gives the following table:

Tilsankranti	Rs. 75/-
Vasant Panchami	Rs. 50/-
Holi	Rs. 90/-
Dussera	Rs. 95/-
Dewali	Rs. 80/-
Christmas	Rs. 175/-

In all, five hundred and sixty-five rupees were spent annually.<sup>98</sup> During Lord Bentinck's administration these expenses were considered unnecessary, and the Commissioner was informed that there was "no sufficient reason for continuing" this practice.<sup>99</sup>

In 1822, the Governor-General granted Baji Rao's wish to possess two guns for firing on ceremonial occasions and presented him with two six-pounders to be manned by his own people. Baji Rao however had no stock of ammunition, which was kept outside the cantonment.<sup>100</sup>

The guns supplied were probably those discarded by the army, and it was risky to use them. One was particularly so "wormed and dangerous" that a man was

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Pol. Pro. 3 April, 1830 (54, 55).

<sup>98</sup> Pol. Cons. 12 Oct., 1827 (44).

<sup>99</sup> Pol. Cons. 12 Oct., 1827 (44).

<sup>100</sup> Foreign Miscellaneous, pp. 357-64, letter dated 13 July, 1822.



killed by explosion when attempting to load it.<sup>101</sup> In 1832, Baji Rao asked Manson to get them exchanged for new ones. The Commissioner suggested "the presentation of three instead of two", so that they might not be "greatly heated", when there was "much firing", particularly on occasions like the Dusserah.<sup>102</sup> The Governor-General authorised the exchange of the two brass guns, and had no objection "to direct the issue of a third if such would be gratifying to the Maharajah".<sup>103</sup> In 1839, following the report of an intrigue for the removal of Baji Rao from the British custody, the Commissioner wanted to withdraw the guns, as a mark of disfavour; their retention by the ex-Peshwa "might on some future occasion be the cause of regret".<sup>104</sup> But Lord Auckland disagreed, and considered their removal a measure not called for.<sup>105</sup>

Did Baji Rao ever give up all hopes of restoration? It is difficult to answer. But in the course of his stay at Bithur his fetters appeared less irksome to him, and he became less dangerous to the British. If it is believed that he had tacit consent in the conspiracy of 1839, it follows that even as late as that he had not ceased to dream of a change of fortune. During Baji Rao's stay at Bithur many attempts to free the ex-Peshwa, or transmit messages from Bithur to the South, are reported. It was not easy for the Commissioner to find out what their real objects were. They were often engineered by designing and dishonest persons who traded on the credulousness of Baji Rao's mind. To the end of his life, Baji Rao cherished a strong desire to see Maharashtra once again.

The truth is that Baji Rao had lived too long. One wonders how Malcolm would have felt when he was arguing with the Governor-General for the grant of a liberal pension to the Peshwa, had he known that he would sur-

<sup>101</sup> Pol. Pro. 3 Sept., 1832 (127).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Pol. Pro., 15 Oct., 1832 (98).

<sup>104</sup> Sec. Pro. 3 July, 1839 (85).

<sup>105</sup> Sec. Pro., 24 July, 1839 (69).

vive another thirty-three years. Baji Rao complained on several occasions that the British Government's ardour towards him had cooled down. But even the former Peshwa must lose his glamour some day. He was a prize captive in 1818, but in 1850, he was a man of little importance. The Commissioners found him at times a little difficult. Baji Rao had no scruple in asking for small favours, but on occasions when he probably felt that his importance was being diminished, he insisted on being treated as still the chief of the Marathas. He caused the Government embarrassment by offering to send khilats to his friends and relations from Bithur. When Lord Bentinck wrote to him in 1831, he wanted to be addressed as the Pant Pradhan.<sup>106</sup> He was anxious to meet Lord Auckland during his tour in the Upper Provinces, but on such terms as if he was "still seated on the guddee at Poona". The Government did not see their way to grant his request, and the Dewan was informed that "such a proposal was quite out of the question".<sup>107</sup> It is significant that after Low and Blacker the Commissioners were no longer brilliant men. The Government perhaps took little trouble in selecting an officer for the post. The ex-Peshwa as well as the Commissioners were losing importance. The Commissioners after Blacker failed to make any impression in their day, and are completely forgotten by posterity.

<sup>106</sup> Pol. Pro. 29 April, 1831 (52).

<sup>107</sup> Pol. Pro. 4 April, 1838 (82).



## CHAPTER II

### JOHN LOW

John Low entered the Company's service as an ensign in the Madras army in 1804, and next year he rose to be a lieutenant in the 1st Madras Native Infantry. During the Maratha War of 1818, he was Sir John Malcolm's aide-de-camp, and acted as his agent in inducing the Peshwa to surrender to the British Government. At the Peshwa's wish he was permitted to escort him to the North,<sup>1</sup> and when Baji Rao took up his residence at Bithur, he was appointed Commissioner.

The Government could hardly make a better selection. "No one", wrote Kaye, "knew the temper" of the Indians better. "He could see with their eyes, speak with their tongues, and read with their understandings."<sup>2</sup> From the first, Baji Rao began to look upon Low as his friend. On his arrival at Bithur, Low reported that the ex-Peshwa's conduct "has hitherto been very exemplary", and writing in 1822, Lord Hastings observed that it had been such as on the whole to afford "great satisfaction".<sup>3</sup> The ex-Peshwa was not exactly the picture of a fallen monarch eating his heart out in exile. He had not given up all hopes of restoration and tried "to keep alive in his former territory an interest in his fate". But he never made any serious bid for power. He was closely watched and had hardly any chance of making a move without the knowledge of the British. It is interesting to note that though Chaplin, Commissioner of the Deccan, always looked upon Baji Rao with some amount of suspicion, John Low was inclined to take a more favourable view of his activities. In spite of the usual prohibitions against holding communications with the public, Baji Rao occasionally managed to send messages out of Bithur. In September, 1819,

<sup>1</sup> Bom. Pol. Pro. 26 Aug., 1818, p. 4898. I.O.

<sup>2</sup> Kaye, *Sepoy War*, i, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> *Papers re Pindarry and Marhatta War*, p. 458.

Elphinstone, then Governor of Bombay, learnt that Baji Rao had sent messages to different persons in the Maratha country.<sup>4</sup> But the incidents which caused the greatest excitement were the activities of the Peshwa's former general Naro Pant Apte. Naro Pant Apte began his career as a favourite of the Peshwa. He played a prominent part in the Maratha War of 1818, but deserted the Peshwa and surrendered to the English before the war was actually over. Later on, he was asked by Baji Rao to join him at Bithur.<sup>5</sup> But he did not get on well with Baji Rao's Dewan Ramchandra Pant, and fell into disgrace. Elphinstone spoke of him in September, 1819, as the only person "of any talents that the Peshwa had about him. He was however no favourite . . . and never was treated with the confidence to which his character entitled him." His "habits were altogether so different from Bajee Row's", that Elphinstone was inclined to regard his invitation to Bithur with suspicion.<sup>6</sup> Naro Pant Apte's stay at Bithur was short. Unless his presence at Bithur was part of a preconceived plan, he must have been very much disillusioned. He came under promise of high pay, but as Baji Rao did not pay him proper allowances, he gradually drifted into the company of those Marathas vaguely described as karkuns or mutsuddis. Many of them had held high posts in the Peshwa's Government, but could not secure any decent employment at Bithur and subsisted on a miserable allowance.<sup>7</sup> About the middle of 1819, Naro Pant Apte informed Low that he intended settling at Gwalior and "get into any good trade", and asked for a letter of introduction to Captain Stewart, the Resident.<sup>8</sup> This was violently opposed by Ramchandra

<sup>4</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Elphinstone to Metcalfe, 2 Sept., 1819. B.R.O.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid; Chaplin to Warden, 30 April, 1821. B.R.O.

<sup>6</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Elphinstone to Metcalfe, 2 Sept., 1819. B.R.O.

<sup>7</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Low's memorandum dated 15 July, 1821. B.R.O.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Pant. He charged Naro Pant with ingratitude, and wanted to compel him to stay at Bithur.<sup>9</sup> But as Naro Pant "appeared to be a quiet inoffensive person" who "had been ill-used" by Baji Rao, Low gave him the desired note to Captain Stewart explaining that Naro Pant had been at Bithur, that he had to leave the place owing to the "irregularity in getting his allowances" and that he was "the person who gets a chair". But the matter did not end so easily. Chaplin believed that Low had been deceived, and declared that Naro Pant had been "sent on a secret mission to Gwalior by the Peshwa".<sup>10</sup> But as late as the end of April, 1821, Chaplin could not discover any proof of Naro Pant's guilt, and his only action which appeared unusual and highly suspicious to Chaplin was that he was "expending considerable sums in a house and establishment" and that he had "sent for his wife and family".<sup>11</sup> About the middle of July, 1821, Low referred to Chaplin's letter to Captain Stewart in which he had accused Naro Pant of intrigues against the British and had related the story that one Roshan Beg was raising troops for the help of the ex-Peshwa near Gwalior, and very correctly pointed out that none of these charges was "in any way substantiated".<sup>12</sup>

Intrigues in favour of Baji Rao had always been the bugbear of Chaplin. In January, 1821, he reported to the Bombay Government that two persons from Bithur had arrived at Poona with the "ostensible object" of procuring a certain oil for the use of Baji Rao. Though no proof could be obtained, Chaplin had no doubt that as they visited some of Baji Rao's friends, they were really

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid ; Chaplin to Warden, 30 April, 1821. B.R.O.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Low's memorandum dated 15 July, 1821. B.R.O. Roshan Beg was one of Holkar's officers. After the battle of Mahidpur he fled to Rampura with Roshan Khan and some of his troops. He was there attacked by General Browne, and his troops were scattered or destroyed, but the "leaders themselves got clear off". Grant Duff, ii, pp. 502-4 ; Blacker, pp. 151, 165 ; Pinsep, pp. 299-300.

“bearers of messages” from the ex-Peshwa. He believed that oral messages were regularly sent to persons at Poona and suspected that Baji Rao was “assiduously engaged in a correspondence with several of the native states”; and that reports were spread at Poona and Bithur, that Baji Rao would “sooner or later return to Poona”,<sup>13</sup> Chaplin further suggested that a secret agent should be appointed at Bithur to keep watch over Baji Rao.<sup>14</sup> At the time, John Low was not present at Bithur, but Captain Blacker who officiated for him wrote to the Governor-General in which he made light of Chaplin’s fears. He, no doubt informed Baji Rao of the inexpediency of sending his servants to the Deccan for some time, as the conduct of his messengers had created an unfavourable impression, and suggested that all such duties might be undertaken on his behalf by the Commissioner. But Blacker refused to share Chaplin’s anxieties. He pointed out that the messengers about whom Chaplin complained had left for the purpose of procuring a particular kind of oil, which was believed to be very efficacious in rheumatism and was prepared only in the South. The messages which were believed to have been delivered to certain persons at Poona should not raise any suspicion. The messengers no doubt expected presents from those to whom they communicated news of the ex-Peshwa, “and the more mystery and consequence they gave to the relation, the greater would be the reward they probably obtained”.<sup>15</sup> As regards the appointment of a secret agent at Bithur, he was quite opposed to it. He believed it “more likely to be productive of mischief than advantage”. Baji Rao would never admit “a stranger into his confidence”, and the newly appointed agent would be left to his resources and perhaps would “contrive a plot for the purpose of after-

<sup>13</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Chaplin to Warden, 20 Jan., 1821.  
B.R.O.

<sup>14</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Blacker to Swinton, 18 Feb., 1821.  
B.R.O.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

wards discovering it".<sup>16</sup> The Governor-General considered Blacker's explanation to be "quite satisfactory", and disliked Chaplin's scheme of employing a secret agent. He described this measure as "inexpedient", and ordered Blacker to dismiss the agent who had already arrived at Bithur.<sup>17</sup>

Chaplin was, however, bent upon putting a stop to all intercourse between Poona and Bithur. He discovered to his horror that the Company's *dawk* had been sometimes the channel of communication, and took measures to detect and prevent it in future.<sup>18</sup> He next issued a proclamation intending to stop all unauthorised communications with Baji Rao, and instructed the Collector to detect any infringement of this order.<sup>19</sup> Similar proclamations had been issued twice before, in February, 1818, and in November, 1819. A third notification was published in June, 1821. It laid down that no person should go to the ex-Peshwa's camp without permission, or send any messenger. All persons coming from Bithur must provide themselves with passports, and must not bring any letter except those signed by the Commissioner with the ex-Peshwa. Passports were to be produced to the proper authorities at each station. It was further provided that no letter should be sent to Baji Rao's camp, and any attempt to do so would be severely punished.<sup>20</sup> The Governor-General-in-Council "did not perceive any objection" to Chaplin's proclamation, but warned him against manifesting "too great a suspicion" of the ex-Peshwa. He also questioned the policy of absolutely stopping all communications with Baji Rao's camp "when proposed

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Swinton to Blacker, 10 March, 1821. B.R.O.

<sup>18</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Chaplin to Warden, 28 June, 1821. B.R.O.

<sup>19</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Chaplin to Collector, 28 June, 1821. B.R.O.

<sup>20</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Chaplin's proclamation dated 28 June, 1821. B.R.O.



to be made with the knowledge and sanction of the Commissioner at Bithur''. The Governor-General further suggested that as Captain Low was about to proceed to Bombay, Chaplin might discuss with him the advisability of the appointment of a news writer, should he still believe that the services of such an agent would be useful at Bithur.<sup>21</sup>

Captain John Low however could not carry on his work for some time. In 1821, he had left Bithur and come to Calcutta, and from the Governor-General's despatch of August, 1821, it seems that he was still there.<sup>22</sup> He was expected to proceed to Bombay before taking up his duties at Bithur. But very likely he did not return to his station. In January, 1822, while in Bombay, a complete breakdown in health compelled him to make the following application to the Bombay Government.<sup>23</sup>

Sir,

The medical gentlemen who have attended me for some weeks past being of opinion that a voyage to sea of considerable length is necessary for my restoration to health and having recommended that I should quit this place for that purpose by the first favourable opportunity that may offer, I have forwarded their official certificate to that effect, to the Secretary to Government in the Political Department at Fort William and have requested the permission of the most Noble the Governor-General-in-Council, to pursue the plan which has been recorded.

I am informed however that the ship *Partridge* is likely to sail for St. Helena long before that permission can reach me and I beg leave therefore to solicit in anticipation of it the sanction of the Government

<sup>21</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Swinton to Warden, 5 Aug., 1821. B.R.O.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Poona Diary 1822, vol. 13/75. Low to Warden, 6 Jan., 1822. B.R.O.

of this Presidency, for my proceeding on board of the above mentioned vessel. . .

Bombay  
January 6, 1822.

John Low  
Commissioner with Bajee Row.

We do not know exactly what was Low's illness. His "medical gentlemen" describe it rather vaguely as "complaint of the lungs and other symptoms of long standing."<sup>24</sup> Miss Ursula Low refers to it as "an illness in which both lungs and liver were affected",<sup>25</sup> and her book which contains many family letters suggesting some very original remedies do not help one to arrive at the correct diagnosis. But it could not possibly be any kind of wasting disease. Low was fit to join his duties in 1825, and retired in 1858, after a strenuous career of fiftyfive years in India.

John Low at first intended to proceed to St. Helena, but after he took his passage on the *Partridge* it was decided that the ship would touch at the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>26</sup> In a letter addressed to the Governor-General, Low expressed his hopes of "avoiding the necessity of proceeding such a great distance as St. Helena, and of having an early opportunity of returning" to India.<sup>27</sup> Low however proceeded to St. Helena, but was disappointed with the climate of the island and complained of "the difficulty of taking exercise".<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that Napoleon, who died in the previous year, had similar grievances against the place. Low left St. Helena after a short stay and returned to the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>29</sup> He next visited the island of Mauritius<sup>30</sup> and about the end of 1824, landed in India. He passed a few months in Bombay as

<sup>24</sup> Poona Diary 1822, vol. 13/75. Medical Certificate, 4 Jan., 1822. B.R.O.

<sup>25</sup> Low, *Fifty Years with John Company*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Poona Diary 1822, vol. 13/75. Low to Swinton (undated). B.R.O.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Low, *Fifty Years with John Company*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

Elphinstone's guest, and took a boat to Calcutta intending to proceed to Bithur by river.<sup>31</sup> He must have looked forward to his work at Bithur. In November, 1824, he had written to his father that the letters he had received from the Government and from Bithur showed that the "interests of some of the Native Chiefs under my control had been sadly neglected during my absence . . . that their affairs have been so mismanaged that I shall now have an intricate mass of counter-claims to unravel, which will be a tedious and troublesome task for me at Bombay and Poona".<sup>32</sup> Low, however, had no opportunity of resuming his work at Bithur. He arrived in Calcutta in September, 1825<sup>33</sup> and was ordered to proceed to Jaipur where he was appointed Resident. But he must have paid a short visit to Bithur, for the Bombay records contain two letters written by him from the Commissioner's office in October and November, 1825.<sup>34</sup> During Low's absence in 1822, his assistant Blacker officiated for him, but early in 1823, we find in the records a new name, that of E. J. Johnson, who succeeded him. Of the Commissioners, Low's period of service was probably the most interesting. When he took charge of the ex-Peshwa the Maratha power was dead, and before he left Bithur he saw it safely buried.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Poona Diary 1825, vol. 6/189. Low to Newnham, 3 Nov., 1825. B.R.O. Poona Diary 1826, vol. 2/225. Low to Newnham, 22 Oct., 1825. B.R.O.



### CHAPTER III

#### E. J. JOHNSON

Captain E. J. Johnson, the successor of Low, had a comparatively easy time. Low's able management of the affairs at Bithur had produced the desired effect. Baji Rao had got used to his changed circumstances, and luxury and forced idleness had softened his spirit. Johnson's letters do not mention many important political events, but one may read in them numerous interesting episodes connected with the ex-Peshwa's life. The Government also considered it unnecessary to maintain a strong body of guards at Bithur, and in May, 1823, there was a proposal for the reduction of their number.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion was subsequently abandoned,<sup>2</sup> but the restrictions placed on the ex-Peshwa's movements were relaxed and he was allowed to pay occasional visits to places of pilgrimage in the neighbourhood. Baji Rao visited Mathura in 1822,<sup>3</sup> and in November, 1823, another journey was made to the same place.<sup>4</sup> He returned in April, 1824, visiting Mainpuri and Fategarh on the way.<sup>5</sup> In the same year he again went to Mathura, and spent the winter there.<sup>6</sup> In 1825, the Government found it inconvenient to arrange for his annual pilgrimage, and Baji Rao was asked to postpone his tour.<sup>7</sup>

Baji Rao was expected to lead a life of complete seclusion and never to maintain any connection with his old adherents. It is for this reason that the Governor-General did not allow him to confer khilat or honorary distinction on his friends and relations. In 1823, when Baji Rao wanted to present a khilat to his brother Amrit Rao

<sup>1</sup> Pol. Pro. 4 July, 1823 (45).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Pol. Pro. 18 July, 1823 (34).

<sup>4</sup> Pol. Pro. 2 Jan., 1824 (30).

<sup>5</sup> Pol. Pro. 7 May, 1824 (36).

<sup>6</sup> Pol. Pro. 16 Sept., 1825 (57).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

on the occasion of his marriage, the Commissioner was informed that the Governor-General did not consider it proper and could not permit the khilat to be sent.<sup>8</sup> Similarly in 1828, when one of his adopted sons was invested with the sacred thread, Baji Rao wanted to send letters of invitation to his friends. The Commissioner evidently did not consider this request unreasonable. He explained to the Governor-General that it was "usual with the natives of all ranks to send invitation to their friends and acquaintances to be present in the ceremony" and the practice was a "mere matter of formal civility". Besides all letters might be examined by the Commissioner and forwarded "through the political authority in the Province".<sup>9</sup> But the Governor-General was definitely opposed to it. He considered it inexpedient to permit the ex-Peshwa to address his old feudatories like Sindhia, Holkar and Gaekwar. He was afraid that Baji Rao might use his old title and designation, and this would serve as a notice to his former friends that he had "adopted an heir to the office of the Peshwa and to all the hopes and pretensions therewith connected", with the apparent sanction of the British Government.<sup>10</sup>

The Governor-General insisted on maintaining a close watch over Baji Rao's attempts to send out messages to his friends in the Deccan. In 1824, Johnson was taken to task by Lord Amherst for permitting the ex-Peshwa's agents to proceed to Aurangabad, on the plea of procuring fruits and flowers for his garden.<sup>11</sup> The Governor-General considered it "obviously a mere feint", and ordered Johnson not to "allow any communication to take place between Bajee Rao and the Deccan without obtaining the previous permission of the Government".<sup>12</sup> Johnson protested that he had no reason to doubt the sincerity

<sup>8</sup> Pol. Pro. 25 July, 1823 (85).

<sup>9</sup> Pol. Pro. 8 Feb., 1828 (57, 58).

<sup>10</sup> Pol. Pro. 8 Feb., 1828 (58).

<sup>11</sup> Pol. Pro. 15 Oct., 1824 (2).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

of the ex-Peshwa, and that it was but natural that he would like to possess the products of his native place, particularly certain fruits of Poona and Aurangabad which were considered to be the best grown in India. He doubted if "too animate a scrutiny into the transactions of Bajee Row's life" would serve the interest of the British Government.<sup>13</sup> The Governor-General did not agree with Johnson, but expressed his conviction that the ex-Peshwa would never give up his hope of some political change which might "restore to him the whole or a part" of his former fortune. He also reminded the Commissioner that it was his "special duty" to "exercise an unceasing and ever-jealous vigilance" over Baji Rao's conduct.<sup>14</sup>

In 1826, Baji Rao caused some embarrassment to the Government. The Governor-General, accompanied by Lady Amherst, was touring in the Upper Provinces, and in October they arrived in Allahabad. Baji Rao wanted to pay him a visit at Cawnpore, and applied for permission to send his Dewan Ramchandra Pant with a complimentary message to the Governor-General.<sup>15</sup> Lord Amherst had no intention of granting an interview to Ramchandra or Baji Rao. He informed Johnson that the "terms and ceremonials of an interview" could not be "arranged on a satisfactory footing", and that the interview would not be "productive of any real pleasure or advantage to either party".<sup>16</sup> Baji Rao made a second request, which was turned down. The Governor-General wanted "to avoid any direct personal intercourse" with the ex-Peshwa, and requested him not to ask for an interview,<sup>17</sup> Baji Rao prayed that at least his Dewan be allowed to carry his complimentary message to Lord Amherst and, similarly, an agent might be sent to him by the Governor-

<sup>13</sup> Pol. Pro. 24 Dec., 1824 (86).

<sup>14</sup> Pol. Pro. 24 Dec., 1824 (87).

<sup>15</sup> Pol. Pro. 8 Dec., 1826 (5).

<sup>16</sup> Pol. Pro. 8 Dec., 1826. Stirling to Johnson, 2 Nov.

<sup>17</sup> Pol. Pro. 8 Dec., 1826. Johnson to Stirling, 5 Nov. Stirling to Johnson, 15 Nov.

General with assurances that the Government was not displeased with his conduct. The Governor-General considered it inconsistent with Baji Rao's position that he should send him a complimentary message, and the idea that an agent should be sent by the Governor-General to Bithur, seemed to him "preposterous".<sup>18</sup> It seems therefore that the suggested interview between Baji Rao and Lord Amherst did not after all materialise. It is interesting to note that a biography of Lord Amherst refers to a meeting between Baji Rao and the Governor-General in October, 1826. The authors describe Lord Amherst's arrival at Allahabad, and mention that the "ex-Peshwa of the Marathas" was among the chiefs who "came to pay their duty".<sup>19</sup> Then follows a quotation, apparently from Lady Amherst's diary, in which Baji Rao's appearance is described. "His dress was uncommon . . . a small pointed gold turban; his diamonds and pearls were few, but large and splendid; his appearance and conversation were animated and sensible."<sup>20</sup> It is very difficult to reconcile this statement with the correspondence that passed between the Commissioner and the Governor-General. The contemporary papers are silent about this meeting. John Low, writing to the Governor of Bombay in 1829, also contradicts the story. "I cannot conceive," he writes "what could have induced Lord Amherst to refuse Bajee Rao's request . . . he offered to give up all notion of his lordship's returning his visit and to come to Cawnpore and be seated on a common chair in his lordship's tent like any little zamindar . . . but Lord Amherst was inflexible. . . "<sup>21</sup>

Towards the end of Johnson's term of office, a mild flutter was caused by the report of a conspiracy to attack Bithur. The author of this plot was one Ramdin, an

<sup>18</sup> Pol. Pro. 8 Dec., 1826. Johnson to Stirling, 20 Nov., and Amherst's note on the letter.

<sup>19</sup> Ritchie and Evans, *Lord Amherst*, p. 180.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> For. Cons. 24 Sept., 1852 (158) enclosure.

inhabitant of the district of Cawnpore. He called himself a Raja and retained a small number of followers. He received a monthly allowance of Rs. 250 from the Government, but it was insufficient to meet his needs, and he was always in want of money.<sup>22</sup> He occasionally came to Bithur, but always behaved properly, and the Commissioner had no reason to be displeased with his conduct.<sup>23</sup> In June, 1827, he paid a visit to Bithur, and asked the Commissioner to bring his hardships to the notice of the Governor-General. He also wanted to go to Bombay and see the Governor. Johnson pointed out that he "had no authority whatever to interfere in his affairs" and he should apply to the magistrate of Cawnpore. Ramdin next attempted to gain some advantages through the mediation of Ramchandra Pant, but failed. He then left Bithur and proceeded to Cawnpore. Soon after, Johnson learnt that Ramdin had formed a plot to assassinate Ramchandra Pant, attack Bithur and kidnap one of the sons of Baji Rao. It sounded so wild and fantastic that Johnson doubted if Ramdin had not lost his reason. After the examination of a few witnesses, Ramdin was produced before the magistrate of Cawnpore and interrogated. The magistrate advised him to leave the town and settle down in his native village. Nothing further was heard about this, and reporting these details to the Governor-General in March, 1828, Johnson concluded that Ramdin had relinquished his designs on Bithur.<sup>24</sup>

Johnson's period of office at Bithur terminated about the end of 1828. He took a short leave in November, and the charge of the Commissioner's office was taken over by G. W. Bacon, the magistrate of Cawnpore.<sup>25</sup> Johnson

<sup>22</sup> Pol. Pro. 11 April, 1828 (46). He was probably the same person who joined Baji Rao after the battle of Ashti. Grant Duff describes him as "a person notorious in the intrigues and anarchy of the period, who made good his way to the Deccan and joined Bajee Rao. . . ." Grant Duff, ii. p. 504.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Pol. Pro. 3 Oct., 1828 (15, 16).



never returned to Bithur but died soon after,<sup>26</sup> and Bacon continued in office till the middle of January, 1829, when he too applied for leave of one month and left the station.<sup>27</sup> Neither Bacon nor his substitute Oldfield was willing to carry on Johnson's work in addition to their duties at Cawnpore. Bacon must have been happy to deliver over the charge of the Commissioner's office to J. Irwin, the magistrate of Cawnpore who succeeded him on the 3rd June, 1829.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Pol. Pro. 2 July, 1832 (107).

<sup>27</sup> Pol. Pro. 26 Dec., 1828 (35).

<sup>28</sup> Pol. Pro. 19 June, 1829 (79).

## CHAPTER IV

### WILLIAM PERCY COOKE

The short period during which William Percy Cooke filled the office of the Commissioner at Bithur is not particularly important. The real interest of the Peshwa's life in exile ceases with the transfer of Low in 1826, and revives only with the appointment of Manson in 1831. Johnson and Cooke, who covered the intervening years, were generally faced with local problems, and administered over a period that was comparatively peaceful and dull. Cooke learnt about his new appointment when he was at Meerut,<sup>1</sup> and received the charge of his office from Irwin, the magistrate of Cawnpore, on the 16th January, 1830.<sup>2</sup> Cooke had a fairly long experience of Indian affairs. His service under the Company dated back to 1803, when he arrived in India as a cadet. In 1823, he became a Captain in the 6th Native Infantry, and in 1829, a Major. He had fought in the Nepal War and the Maratha War of 1818, and had also taken part in the siege of Bharatpore under Combermere in 1826. But Cooke is hardly mentioned by historians, and military biographers generally ignore him. His name does not occur in Lady Combermere's work on the siege of Bharatpore. Creighton, the author of *The Siege and Capture of Bharatpore*, refers to him only in the list of officers who were present in the siege. Probably Cooke's health was partly responsible for his lack of prominence in public life. He arrived at Bithur when his health was rapidly declining, and in two years' time, he died.

As soon as Cooke joined at Bithur, he found himself in an awkward position. The English writer attached to his establishment had fled, and many of the documents in his charge were found destroyed or missing.<sup>3</sup> It was

<sup>1</sup> Pol. Pro. 8 Jan., 1830 (135).

<sup>2</sup> Pol. Pro. 29 Jan., 1830 (41).

<sup>3</sup> Pol. Pro. 19 Feb., 1830 (50).

some time before he could trace some of the missing records and properly conduct his business. Moreover, soon after joining he made an error of judgment for which he was censured by the authorities. The circumstances were as follows. Shortly after his arrival at Bithur, the Commissioner and his wife paid a visit to the house of the ex-Peshwa's Dewan Ramchandra Pant. Ramchandra presented the Commissioner's wife with a string of gold coins, and her children with two gold mohurs each. In accordance with the official regulations, all presents should have been carried to the account of the Government. But Cooke found that the Dewan was very much annoyed that even a souvenir could not be retained by the Commissioner's wife. So Cooke wrote to the Governor-General about it, and the Dewan was left with the impression that it would be retained by his wife. The Governor-General strongly disapproved of the Commissioner's conduct. He was ordered to send the presents to the Governor-General's office at the "first convenient opportunity", and was reminded that the practice of interchange of presents was forbidden, and on similar occasions, he was to "plead the positive orders of the Government".<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after this a more reasonable request made by Cooke was turned down by the authorities. Cooke was anxious to provide the best medical help for himself and his family. In February, 1830, he petitioned the Governor-General that he might be permitted to secure the services of the "assistant surgeon attached to the military station of Cawnpore" in whose "capacity and experience", he had every confidence. He explained that his own health was "precarious", his wife's, "extremely delicate", and that his children were "in constant need of professional assistance". Under normal circumstances, the civil surgeon at Cawnpore was expected to look after the Commissioner's household. But Cooke had no intention of securing his professional assistance. He did not

<sup>4</sup> Pol. Pro. 3 April, 1830 (54, 55).



know him very well, but from the little he had seen of him, he had no wish to employ him as his medical attendant. But the Governor-General did not agree to his request. He saw no reason why the usual practice should be altered. Cooke was informed that according to the prevailing custom the civil surgeon of Cawnpore "should afford medical aid to the Commissioner and his establishment", and that the Governor-General did not consider it necessary or expedient to depart from that arrangement.<sup>5</sup>

A request made by Cooke for the maintenance of a party of horse at Bithur also met with a similar fate. Formerly it was the custom to post a body of Major Fitzgerald's irregular horse and some infantry at Bithur for assisting the Commissioner. During Johnson's term of office there was a suggestion for the withdrawal of the horse, which was subsequently abandoned. But sometime before Cooke's appointment, the body of horse was withdrawn, and Cooke found it difficult to carry on without it. He wrote to the Governor-General that it was "essential that a mounted escort should be stationed" there. But as the Government did not comply with his request, he wrote again, and stated his reasons for asking for a body of horse to be posted at Bithur. He explained that as there was no regular *dawk* between Cawnpore and Bithur, it was necessary to employ four *sowers* for conveying letters every day. Besides, there should be a body of cavalry to attend the Commissioner on public occasions. The ex-Peshwa maintained about 600 horse and 700 infantry. The Commissioner who exercised authority over them without a single trooper to assist him, was in a very curious and anomalous position. Cases of robbery were common, and there ought to be a body of horse and enough men to assist the Commissioner in maintaining order and peace.<sup>6</sup> Cooke's application did not meet with

<sup>5</sup> Pol. Pro. 5 March, 1830 (84, 85).

<sup>6</sup> Pol. Pro. 5 March, 1830 (64, 65); 16 April, 1830 (117).

any success and he continued the practice of borrowing Baji Rao's troopers on special occasion.<sup>7</sup> Cooke's successor, Major Faithful, also brought to the notice of the Governor-General the difficulties of carrying on his duties without the assistance of a mounted escort. He pointed out that the post office, the dispensary and the offices at Cawnpore with which the Commissioner had to communicate frequently, were situated at a distance of ten or twelve miles or more. This, in itself, was a sufficient reason for the grant of a party of horse. Besides, Baji Rao did not like the employment of his own men by the Commissioner, and considered the withdrawal of the escort a measure derogatory to his honour. As the ex-Peshwa gave no cause for complaint, and behaved exceptionally well, Major Faithful suggested that a number of troopers, preferably "a party of thirty irregular horse" might be kept at Bithur. It would serve a very useful purpose, and please the ex-Peshwa immensely.<sup>8</sup> Faithful's arguments however did not change the Governor-General's attitude. His letter was merely acknowledged, and he was informed that it did not "call for any particular orders from the Governor-General."<sup>9</sup>

About the middle of the year 1830, it was suspected that Baji Rao was intriguing with his friends in the Deccan. In the month of May, Cooke had requested the collector of customs at Cawnpore that Shesha Shastri, "one of the principal adherents of the Maharajah", be permitted to take with him to the Deccan twenty pieces of cloth, valued at two thousand and two hundred rupees. They were presents from the ex-Peshwa to his family priest Sri Shankar Acharyya, an inhabitant of the village of Sringari. After some discussion, the necessary permit was granted and the Shastri left Bithur. Lord William Bentinck, however, regarded him as a very undesirable person and con-

<sup>7</sup> Pol. Pro. 9 Dec., 1831 (41).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Pol. Pro. 13 Jan., 1832 (81).

sidered his movements highly suspicious. It appeared to the Governor-General that the application for a permit to carry the pieces of cloth was a pretext for a journey to the Deccan on some dangerous mission. On the 11th June, 1830, the Governor-General's secretary addressed a letter to Cooke in which he was advised to suspend further proceedings "with regard to the prosecution of Bajee Rao's object" and inform the ex-Peshwa that his agent "cannot be permitted to repair to the Deccan, until the sanction of his lordship in council has been received."<sup>10</sup> Before this letter reached Cooke, Shesha Shastri had already left for Benares on his way to the Deccan. Cooke wrote to the British agent at Benares requesting him to adopt measures for his detention.<sup>11</sup> He also explained to the Governor-General that on account of the lapse of time, and the freedom from restraint virtually enjoyed by Baji Rao and his followers, he considered the old instructions regulating their movements to be "nearly a dead letter".<sup>12</sup> Cooke further pointed out that some of Baji Rao's followers had been occasionally permitted to proceed to the South without any special reference to the Government.<sup>13</sup> The enquiry made by the Government proved Shesha Shastri to be a harmless person, and Cooke was asked to inform the Governor-General's agent at Benares, that the Shastri might be "permitted to proceed to his destination".<sup>14</sup>

About the same time, a conspiracy was reported to the Governor-General. The central figure in this plot was a Maratha banker of Surat named Tulsiram Mayaram. He is described as a "stout man of dark complexion" with prominent pockmarks.<sup>15</sup> He was a wealthy person, for he maintained a well-furnished house at Allahabad, and kept eight or ten servants and a palanquin. He opened a

<sup>10</sup> Pol. Pro. 11 June, 1830 (57, 58).

<sup>11</sup> Pol. Pro. 13 Aug., 1830 (2).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Pol. Pro. 13 Aug., 1830 (5).

<sup>15</sup> Pol. Pro. 16 July, 1830 (57).

banking house in Calcutta, and intended to open another at Allahabad.<sup>16</sup> He also paid a visit to Bithur.<sup>17</sup> and in 1830, his son Manikchand was a resident of the place.<sup>18</sup> Seven of Tulsiram's letters written to various persons were intercepted, of which two were in Persian, two in Marathi and three in Gujrati.<sup>19</sup> Of these the Marathi letters proved the most interesting. One of them was addressed to the ex-Peshwa and the other was intended for his senior consort Varanasi Bai.<sup>20</sup> Their purport was that the writer had performed the commission entrusted to him, and interviewed Sir John Malcolm. Malcolm "had obtained what the Maharajah had desired". But as "there still remained something to be settled", Baji Rao should furnish him with a power of attorney, and send him money. The letters also mentioned certain pearls procured "for the prince and the Ranee", which "would be forwarded by another opportunity". The messenger who brought these letters from Surat was placed under arrest and questioned. But he had no knowledge of the contents of the letters and helped very little to clear the mystery.<sup>21</sup> Baji Rao himself disclaimed all knowledge of the writer and of the allusions in the letter, and desired that the case should be investigated. Cooke also believed that Baji Rao had no knowledge of this correspondence. In his letter to the Governor-General dated the 30th June, 1830, he wrote that he was "satisfied" that the ex-Peshwa was "in no way implicated in it", the letters "might have been suggested and prompted by persons in this camp, with a view to alarm the prince and to extort money, or perhaps and which is more probable, to afford the detectors the merit

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Poona Diary, vol. 9/333. 1829-30. Tulsiram's letters to Manikchand; memorandum from the Persian Secretary dated 14 July, 1830. B.R.O.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Varanasi Bai was suffering from consumption and she died on 21 Feb., 1830, before these letters were detected.

<sup>21</sup> Pol. Pro. 16 July, 1830 (57); Cooke's letter dated 25 June, 1830.

of discovering an intrigue".<sup>22</sup> Cooke noted that other letters "of an intriguing character" were delivered through the post office at Cawnpore,<sup>23</sup> and informed the Governor-General that he was convinced that the letters sent from Surat "had been projected" from Bithur.<sup>24</sup> In order to stop all unauthorised communication, Cooke suggested that all letters addressed to the camp at Bithur should be first submitted to the Commissioner for his inspection.<sup>25</sup> But this idea had to be given up on account of the question of the unpaid postage and the want of an adequate number of peons.<sup>26</sup> The Commissioner was informed in August, 1830, that the Governor-General in council did not consider "it necessary to adopt any new measures of precaution".<sup>27</sup>

Towards the end of Cooke's period of office an interesting point was raised and referred to the Governor-General Lord Bentinck. In January, 1831, Cooke reported to the Governor-General that Baji Rao had informed him that he had been promised a khilat "by Lord Amherst on the occasion of his adoption of his two sons" in 1827, and that he hoped that it would be conferred on him without further delay.<sup>28</sup> It is impossible to learn the circumstances under which such a promise, if ever, was made. Johnson who was then the Commissioner at Bithur, had died, and many of the necessary papers could not be traced on account of a theft committed in the Commissioner's office some time back. But there seems to have been some basis for Baji Rao's representation. There is a letter written by Johnson on the 14th June, 1827, that is, seven days after the adoption, in which he stated to the Governor-General's secretary that he had

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Pol. Pro. 13 Aug., 1830 (6).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Pol. Pro. 13 Aug., 1830 (8).

<sup>28</sup> Pol. Pro. 29 April, 1831 (52).



been informed that Baji Rao "would consider it a great compliment" if the Commissioner would present him with a khilat on the occasion and receive one in return.<sup>29</sup> The Governor-General was not in Calcutta when Johnson's letter arrived there. But the Commissioner was informed of the vice-president's and the council's doubts as to the expediency of granting a khilat to Baji Rao, and he was advised further that his letter would be transmitted to Lord Amherst and that he would hear from him in due course.<sup>30</sup> We do not know what the Governor-General's orders were, or if Johnson wrote anything in reply to the ex-Peshwa. Johnson died soon after he left Bithur, and apparently the matter was allowed to drift. In 1831, Baji Rao repeated his prayer, and produced a Marathi letter dated the 9th September, 1827, written by Johnson to his Dewan Ramchandra Pant. In this letter Johnson began by referring to the "daily increase" of friendship between Baji Rao and the Company, and the adoption of the two sons. He then made two interesting statements. In the first place, he mentioned that "it is settled that a khilat shall be sent from the Honourable Company". Secondly, he acknowledged that the "Maharajah formerly gave six lakhs of rupees to the Company's loan, and at present", the Company was "to receive some more". But in future no more demand should be made on him.<sup>31</sup> Additional details were gathered from the examination of the Maratha writer attached to the Commissioner's office, and the information supplied by Ramchandra Pant. They testified that at Baji Rao's request, the letter was dictated by Johnson in the presence of Ramchandra Pant, and that it was "a condition of his advancing three lakhs of rupees" to the Company, which he was extremely reluctant to do.<sup>32</sup> It seems that the details mentioned in the Marathi letter of the 9th September, were mainly correct.

<sup>29</sup> Pol. Pro. 6 July, 1827 (28).

<sup>30</sup> Pol. Pro. 6 July, 1827 (29).

<sup>31</sup> Pol. Pro. 29 April, 1831 (52).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Cooke also saw no reason to question the validity of the letter. On the other hand he placed the facts before the Governor-General for his "indulgent consideration". He pointed out that Baji Rao "was influenced to a very reluctant step by his faith in the written assurance of the Commissioner that the khilat would be conferred on him by the Governor-General"; and "whether the Commissioner had or had not extended authority in giving that promise", the Governor-General had no option but to "give him credit for possessing it" as his agent, particularly as the Government had benefited from its results. If the promise were withdrawn, it would cause disappointment and distrust in Baji Rao's mind and "loss of confidence in any Commissioner attached to him".<sup>33</sup> It should be mentioned, however, in this connection, that when on the 20th September, that is, only eleven days after the date of the Marathi letter, Johnson made his report to Stirling, the magistrate of Cawnpore, he gave a slightly different version. His letter does not speak of a definite assurance, but that "he had merely hinted at the probability" of a khilat being conferred on Baji Rao.<sup>34</sup> It was also suggested that probably Johnson really did not understand the purport of the Marathi letter, a statement which was hotly contested by Baji Rao, and the Commissioner was informed that there was no chance of a mistake, for the entire document had been taken down word for word to Johnson's dictation before a number of witnesses.<sup>35</sup> The Governor-General does not seem to have entered into the question of the Commissioner's authority as an agent of the Governor-General, or the real facts of the case. On the 19th May, 1831, he gave a short answer to Cooke's representation. The Commissioner was informed that if the promise of a khilat was given by Lord Amherst, "its completion should have been claimed by Bajee Rao of

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Pol. Pro. 22 July, 1831 (107).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

the same Governor-General". It was stated in the same letter that Lord Bentinck had also considered the application "as a new one, without reference to the alleged promise", and he was "compelled to say" that the granting of a khilat was "objectionable".<sup>36</sup>

This decision naturally caused great mortification and disappointment to Baji Rao. He "declared that he had always held the Commissioner's word as sacred", and he never questioned his authority "in entering into a formal and written engagement with him when negotiating for his subscription to the Government loan".<sup>37</sup> He asked the Commissioner to inform the Governor-General of his sentiments, and accordingly on the 21st June, 1831, Cooke addressed a letter to Lord Bentinck at Simla.<sup>38</sup> The Governor-General replied that he saw no ground for revising his former decision.<sup>39</sup>

Whatever one might think of the political wisdom of the Governor-General's attitude, Baji Rao had good reasons for believing that he had been duped. On his own admission, Johnson "spared no trouble or persuasion to induce the Maharajah to subscribe handsomely" to the Government loan, and "hinted" at the prospect of a khilat from the Governor-General, and thus cleverly played on the cherished hopes of the ex-Peshwa.<sup>40</sup> His suggestions carried more weight than he probably imagined.

The consideration of the ex-Peshwa's rights to the khilat was the last important work undertaken by Cooke. His period of office was fast drawing to a close. It has been said before, that Cooke's health, and that of his wife

<sup>36</sup> Pol. Pro. 17 June, 1831 (92). It seems that undue importance has been attached to the presentation of a khilat to the ex-Peshwa. It was a common social courtesy and did not necessarily recognise his regal status.

<sup>37</sup> Pol. Pro. 22 July, 1831 (107).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Pol. Pro. 22 July, 1831 (108).

<sup>40</sup> Pol. Pro. 29 April, 1831 (41); 22 July, 1831 (107).



and children, had always been unsatisfactory. In 1830, Cooke's wife and one of his children became seriously ill, and arrangements were made for sending them to Calcutta by boat for embarkation for Europe. On the 5th October, Cooke made an application "for leave of absence . . . from the first proximo, until the 1st February next, with permission to visit the Presidency".<sup>41</sup> Evidently he intended accompanying them to Calcutta. We do not know what was the nature of Mrs. Cooke's illness. Her husband's letter to the Government speaks of an "unhappy malady" and the loss of her "composure of mind".<sup>42</sup> Cooke did not, after all, accompany her to Calcutta. A letter written by him to the Governor-General, three weeks after the application for leave, appears to have an ominous significance. He asked the Governor-General's permission "to forego" his leave, "its necessity no longer existing".<sup>43</sup>

Cooke survived less than a year after this. His end came very suddenly, and he died at Cawnpore on the 18th July, 1831.<sup>44</sup> The charge of his office was temporarily taken over by Thompson, the magistrate of Cawnpore. On the 29th July, 1831, Major Faithful, of the 14th Regiment Native Infantry posted at Cawnpore, was ordered to proceed to Bithur and assume charge of the Commissioner's office.<sup>45</sup> On the 6th August, Faithful took over from Thompson, and held the office till the appointment of Manson in November, 1831.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Pol. Pro. 14 Oct., 1830 (16).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Pol. Pro. 5 Nov., 1830 (72).

<sup>44</sup> Pol. Pro. 29 July, 1831 (111); 5 Aug., 1831 (44).

<sup>45</sup> Pol. Pro. 12 Aug., 1831 (113).

<sup>46</sup> Pol. Pro. 2 Sept., 1831 (123); 16 Sept., 1831 (71); 18 Nov., 1831 (85).

## CHAPTER V

### JAMES MANSON

Captain James Manson was not altogether pleased with his appointment at Bithur. He came to India as a cadet in 1807, became a Lieutenant in 1814, and was promoted to the rank of a Captain in 1825. In 1831, he was working as the Assistant Military Accountant-General when he was appointed Commissioner with the ex-Peshwa.<sup>1</sup>

The post offered him little prospects, he considered himself ill-paid, and later made an unsuccessful attempt to have his salary increased.<sup>2</sup> While other Commissioners were transferred after five or six years of service, it was Manson's fate to continue for twenty years, and it was only when Baji Rao at last died, that he was released.<sup>3</sup> But whatever might have been Manson's view of his life at Bithur, it was not without some interest. Between 1831 and 1851, a large number of intrigues were discovered by the Commissioner. Many of them were "feeble and extraordinary", and sometimes fantastic. The ex-Peshwa had very often little to do with them. But there is no doubt that some people found in him a possible source of income, and tried to take advantage of his credulousness.

Among those whose names are mentioned in this connection there were all kinds of people. Many of them were Marathas, but there were also people from the North, and Europeans or Anglo-Indians. Their plans chiefly consisted in attempts to secure money from Baji Rao or his Dewan by false pretences or impersonation. No political significance was attached to them, and they were generally regarded as mere clever attempts at cheating.

<sup>1</sup> Dodwell and Miles, *Bengal Army List*, pp. 184-5 ; Pol. Cons. 16 April, 1830 (128, 129) ; Pol. Cons. 16 Sept., 1831 (69, 70).

<sup>2</sup> Pol. Cons. 26 May, 1849 (11).

<sup>3</sup> In November, 1843, he joined his regiment 72. N.I. for a short period when Caldecott, the officiating magistrate of Cawnpore, took charge of the office. Pol. Pro. 21 Dec., 1842 (130).

Probably the earliest case of this description was that of Vishnu Pandit. Vishnu Pandit was a resident of Bithur. Like many other Brahmins he was maintained by Baji Rao, and used to receive occasional gifts of money from him. In 1826, he made a representation to the Government to the effect that he was a paid servant of the ex-Peshwa, and claimed 400 rupees as arrears of his salary. Captain Johnson, who was then the Commissioner, replied to the Governor-General that his claim could not be supported. In 1833, Vishnu Pandit again applied to the Government and Manson was asked to report on the case. Manson consulted Ramchandra and replied that Vishnu Pandit was never a servant of the ex-Peshwa, but had been "most persevering" in his endeavour to get some money out of him. The Commissioner pointed out that no evidence was produced by Vishnu Pandit to prove his claims, and that the very fact that he preferred his claims five years after he had left Bithur, was sufficient proof that his case was false and vexatious.<sup>4</sup>

In October, 1833, a "feeble and extraordinary conspiracy" was reported to the Commissioner. A Brahmin named Krishna Datta had plotted with Baji Rao's brother-in-law Lakshman Pant and others to seize Baji Rao on the Dussera day and take him to Poona. With this object a number of armed men were collected from the neighbourhood. On enquiry, Manson found that Krishna Datta's real object was to plunder the treasury and possibly also to seize the jewels that the Peshwa might wear on the occasion. The Commissioner had "no reason to suppose that Bajee Rao or any of his more respectable adherents were privy" to this plot, and Lakshman Pant was duped in the belief that it was really a measure to liberate the ex-Peshwa. Krishna Datta, Lakshman Pant and a few others were arrested. But the magistrate of Cawnpore found it difficult to punish them under any regulation, the evidence adduced "tending merely to the substantiation of

<sup>4</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Jan., 1834 (127) ; 28 Nov., 1833 (66).

a political offence''. The Governor-General decided that if the offence were not punishable by any existing laws, the prisoners must be released.<sup>5</sup>

This was followed, in 1836, by Yamuna Bai's affairs. Yamuna Bai was the widow of Baji Rao's general Bapu Gokhale, who had died in the battle of Ashti in February, 1818. In April, 1833, she arrived at Bithur and wanted to press certain claims against Ramchandra Pant. At that time both the Commissioner and Ramchandra were at Lucknow. Manson received a letter from an Anglo-Indian named Mosley, who described himself as Yamuna Bai's agent, and informed him that he had filed a suit against Ramchandra in the Commissioner's office. A karkun from Yamuna Bai also called on Manson, and explained that Ramchandra had been a servant of Gokhale, had held *saranjami* lands and commanded a body of troops under him. Yamuna Bai wanted him to render accounts of the payment received by him after her husband's death. The selection of Mosley as Yamuna Bai's agent was unfortunate. Mosley bore a very shady reputation. He had been formerly a clerk in the Commissioner's office but was dismissed by Major Faithful for malpractice.<sup>6</sup> Manson considered the claims as absurd, and pleaded his inability to investigate. He asked the karkun why fifteen years were allowed to elapse before the claims were brought, and warned him against the danger of appointing men like Mosley.<sup>7</sup> For three years, nothing more was heard from Yamuna Bai, and the Commissioner felt that "the lady and her advisers had been convinced of the folly of their proceedings" and the "absurdity of their pretensions". But in 1836, Yamuna Bai again pressed her claims through her agent Anand Rao, who was known to the Commissioner as a "troublesome and litigious" character. As on the former occasion,

<sup>5</sup> Pol. Cons. 21 Nov., 1833 (103); 5 Dec., 1833 (113, 116).

<sup>6</sup> Pol. Cons. 23 May, 1836 (159).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Manson disbelieved her story. He believed that as she had been socially penalised by Ramchandra and other respectable adherents of Baji Rao for some of her improprieties, she was trying to harass and annoy Baji Rao and his Dewan. Whatever might have been the relation between Ramchandra and his former master, it must have "ceased", according to him, by Baji Rao's "total change of position by the terms of his surrender". As Yamuna Bai had left Baji Rao's camp after her husband's death, a renewal of the former terms could not have been possible.<sup>8</sup>

In 1834, an unusual thing happened when summons was issued by the Sheriff's Court in Calcutta on Baji Rao, and the widow and the daughter of Chimnaji Appa, who were staying with him, to appear before the Supreme Court at Fort William.<sup>9</sup> It appeared that a lady who called herself Yasoda Bai, the widow of Peshwa Savai Madhav Rao, and the adoptive mother of Chimnaji had preferred a claim to properties left by Chimnaji. Savai Madhav Rao's widow was believed to have died about 1810, and the appearance of a second Yasoda Bai caused no end of embarrassment. In order to understand the full significance of this story, some knowledge of the Maratha politics at Poona, about the year 1796, is necessary. In that year, Peshwa Savai Madhav Rao died, and his death was followed by disturbances. Nana Fadnavis, who wanted to keep Baji Rao out of power, came to an agreement with the Maratha Chiefs that Chimnaji would be adopted by Savai Madhav Rao's widow, Yasoda Bai, and recognised as the next Peshwa. The adoption, however, was soon declared invalid, and Baji Rao ousted his brother and became the next Peshwa. In 1802, when Yashwant Rao Holkar invaded Poona, Yasoda Bai was sent away with other ladies to Raigarh for safety. She probably never returned to Poona, but died in Raigarh after eight years.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Pol. Cons. 29 Dec., 1849 (373).



The lady who claimed to be the widow of the late Peshwa had made her first attempt to pass off as Yasoda Bai as early as about 1816, when Baji Rao was the Peshwa; the claims were examined and declared to be false.<sup>10</sup> About 1826, when Elphinstone was the Governor of Bombay, the same lady preferred a claim to be considered as Savai Madhav Rao's widow, which was rejected.<sup>11</sup> In 1829, another unsuccessful attempt was made by the same person.<sup>12</sup>

When the Sheriff's officer called on the Commissioner, he protested that Baji Rao was not amenable to the Supreme Court, and that he could not allow the summons to be served. So a copy of the writ was left with the Commissioner and its receipt was acknowledged.<sup>13</sup> Manson examined persons who used to know Yasoda Bai and were more or less acquainted with the circumstances of her death. In all, six persons were examined. The first of them, Muraji, who was a servant of Chimnaji Appa, testified that the real Yasoda Bai had died about 23 years ago, and he remembered Chimnaji Appa observing the usual period of mourning. He also stated that a few years before Chimnaji's death, he used to receive messages from the second Yasoda Bai, asking him to admit her to his presence. But Chimnaji ordered his servants not to mention even her name.<sup>14</sup> Similar statements were made by other witnesses. Abaji, a Brahmin, used to know Savai Madhav Rao's widow. He paid a visit to Indore, while the second Yasoda Bai was there, and found her to be a different person.<sup>15</sup> Almost the same thing was said by Govind Rao Mehendele. He had heard about the death of Yasoda Bai at Raigarh. Later on, when he heard about the lady who called herself Savai Madhav Rao's widow,

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Pol. Cons. 29 Dec., 1849 (373) enclosure 1.

<sup>15</sup> Pol. Cons. 29 Dec., 1849 (373) enclosure 3.

he saw her at Benares and found her to be an impostor. She was not the lady whom he "had seen a hundred times when alive".<sup>16</sup> It was also revealed by the first witness that Chimnaji Appa had no property in Calcutta.<sup>17</sup> Consequently the Supreme Court had no jurisdiction to interfere. The Commissioner suggested that attempts should be made to bring about the conviction of the impostor and her abettors for false impersonation and attempts to obtain property by fraudulent means.<sup>18</sup> But obviously nothing was done. Again in October, 1849, Manson learnt that a claim had been "preferred by an impostor calling herself Yasoda or Jesoda Bhyee", and he was asked to "ascertain quietly and without allowing" his "object to be discovered, any facts" that might "tend to confirm the evidence already possessed by Government of the death of the real Esodah Bhaye. . .". Manson was also asked to report if Chimnaji's grandson, who was staying with Baji Rao, was likely to be in collusion with the impostor.<sup>19</sup> In reply, Manson referred to his correspondence with the Government on the subject in 1834. His enquiries, he believed, fully confirmed the fact of Yasoda Bai's death, but he suggested that people might be found in the neighbourhood of Poona or Raigarh, or in Yasoda Bai's own family, from whom additional information about her death might be collected. Regarding Chimnaji Appa's grandson, who also bore the same name, Manson replied that he was only eleven or twelve years old, and there was no ground for suspecting him or any of his immediate adherents to be in league with the impostor.<sup>20</sup>

But apart from such cases of fraud and speculation there were a few instances which gave real cause of anxiety to the Government, and sometimes foreign states like Burma or Nepal were mentioned as being in league with Baji Rao.

<sup>16</sup> Pol. Cons. 29 Dec., 1849 (373) enclosure 5.

<sup>17</sup> Pol. Cons. 29 Dec., 1849 (373) enclosure 1.

<sup>18</sup> Pol. Cons. 29 Dec., 1849 (373).

<sup>19</sup> Pol. Cons. 29 Dec., 1849 (371).

<sup>20</sup> Pol. Cons. 29 Dec., 1849 (373).

The earliest case of this description was the incident known as Hearsey's "conspiracy".

Major Hearsey was one of those little known soldiers of fortune who served the various Indian states about the end of the 18th century, and settled down to peaceful pursuits after Lord Lake's campaigns in Hindusthan, in 1803. The family of Hearsey had been in the service of the East India Company from the middle of the 18th century. Hearsey got his first job as aide-de-camp to the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, in 1798. Next year, he joined Daulat Rao Sindhia's officer Perron and served under him till 1800. He next found employment under the Irish adventurer George Thomas, and took a prominent part in the quarrel between Perron and Thomas. He seems to have been an indifferent soldier and never obtained the prominence of Hopkins or even of Birch. After Thomas's defeat and death, he thought of carving out a small state for himself in Rajputana, but gave up the idea after Wellesley's proclamation to European and Anglo-Indian officers. He disbanded his men, except a regiment of cavalry, and accepted a pension of eight hundred rupees a month from the Company.

After the termination of the Maratha War, Hearsey married a Muslim lady and settled down at Kareli in Rohilkhand. But a quiet domestic life seems to have had little attraction for him. In 1808, he joined a party of explorers for the survey of the upper course of the Ganges. Four years after, he joined William Moorcroft in a more interesting expedition to Tibet. The party had two objects in view, to procure samples of wool from Tibet, and to survey Lake Mansarovara. They proceeded as Hindu mendicants and reached Mansarovara in August, 1812. It was not possible to complete the survey on account of Moorcroft's illness, and they left after a stay of three days. A report of the journey was drawn up from notes kept by Hearsey, and placed before a meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.



Hearsey also rendered valuable help to the Company in the Gurkha War of 1814, and later on assisted the Government in crushing a rebellion of the Rohillas in Bareilly. He was promoted to the rank of Major and was presented with a sword by the Government of India as a recognition of his services. In 1824, he took part in Combermere's siege of Bharatpore. This was probably the last important military excursion in which he was present.<sup>21</sup>

In 1832, Hearsey again came into prominence. He addressed a letter in Marathi to the ex-Peshwa's Dewan Ramchandra Pant with certain proposals. Ramchandra Pant apparently was unwilling to entertain unauthorised correspondence, and sent the letter unopened to the Commissioner.<sup>22</sup> The Commissioner found the letter objectionable, and sent a copy of it with an English translation to the Governor-General. Manson does not seem to have been familiar with Hearsey's name. In his note to the Governor-General he referred to him as "a Major Hearsey", formerly believed to be in the Maratha service, and "now residing at or in the neighbourhood of Bareilly".<sup>23</sup> Hearsey's letter to Ramchandra Pant contained several propositions. He first referred to a previous meeting with Ramchandra Pant at Colonel Comyn's<sup>24</sup> house at Cawnpore, and after the usual civilities explained the purpose of his letter. The Company's charter, he pointed out, was going to expire in 1832, and would not be renewed, for the King would "take possession of the whole of Hindoostan". The Governor-General had "reduced very much the salaries of all the officers of the Government" and the same might happen to the ex-

<sup>21</sup> For Hearsey's life see *The Hearseys* by Pearse; *European Military Adventurers* by Compton; *East Indian Worthies* by Stark and Madge. For an account of the trip to Mansarovar see *Asiatic Researches* vol. XII. Occasional references may be found in *European Adventurers in Northern India* by Grey and Garrett.

<sup>22</sup> Pol. Cons. 5 March, 1832 (82).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Colonel William Comyn, 33 Native Infantry.

Peshwa's establishment. It was doubtful if the arrangements entered into with Sir John Malcolm would continue. So Hearsey suggested the following course. A petition should be forwarded to the Board of Directors with the prayer that Baji Rao's "pension should be exchanged for a Jagheer in the Deckhun or in some other place" and that it should be made hereditary. Secondly, something should be done about the booty which was collected at Poona and sent to England. As the plunder was not taken in action but seized afterwards, the Company had no right to it. Hearsey proposed that in the first instance an application should be made to the Court of Directors, and then to the Board of Control. If these measures did not succeed, a petition should be presented to the King. He was sure that the King would give "instant attention to it" and send "a favourable answer and settle the matter". The King should be offered "one fourth or one half of the treasure", and "from the desire to possess this", he would be "glad to grant the Jagheer". Hearsey had a friend who would proceed to England in a few days. He might carry the three petitions, and act as Baji Rao's agent. If Ramchandra Pant found these suggestions agreeable, Hearsey would send to Bithur a Deccan Brahmin "well acquainted with the English language" for arranging the details. Afterwards, an intelligent karkun might be sent to Hearsey and the petitions finally drawn up.<sup>25</sup>

Hearsey apparently had no idea that he was incurring the displeasure of the Government. His letter was delivered in so "unguarded a manner" that it surprised the Commissioner. It was not brought by any special messenger but an ordinary servant who "wore a breast plate with Major Hearsey's name engraved on it". He was not instructed to act with secrecy, for he appeared before the Commissioner and asked for a reply.<sup>26</sup> The Governor-

<sup>25</sup> Pol. Cons. 5 March, 1832 (83); Foreign Miscellaneous, 1832, pp. 287-90.

<sup>26</sup> Pol. Cons. 5 March, 1832 (82).

General wrote to Manson desiring him to "call upon Major Hearsey to state whether he addressed the letter" to Ramchandra, and "if so, to offer any explanation of his object and motive".<sup>27</sup> On the 31st March, Hearsey replied to the Commissioner. He acknowledged that he had warned Baji Rao's Dewan that Malcolm's policy might be "upset" and that it would be wise to petition Lord Bentinck to have the ex-Peshwa's allowance commuted for a jagir. He believed that Baji Rao's treasures and jewels had been retained by the Company "without any legal plea" and so advised the Dewan to "offer as salvage (it having been buried) 25 per cent to His Majesty who in his goodness and liberality might make it a present to the army or to the Honourable Company". Hearsey also charged the Government with breach of faith, and referred to the fate of the Maratha officers who were induced by the Governor-General's proclamation "to quit the Maratha service" and come over to the British. Wellesley had promised that "they were to receive the allowance they there enjoyed", but his successor Sir George Barlow "put his own construction" on the Governor-General's assurance, and Hearsey himself was one of those who were compelled to accept "the most trivial pensions" from the Government. He ended by asking the Commissioner to place his reply before the Governor-General so that he might form his own conclusions.<sup>28</sup>

Hearsey's explanation did not please the Governor-General. He did not like that old questions once settled should be re-opened. That a pensioner of the Government should approach the ex-Peshwa with proposals that might cause a great deal of embarrassment seemed to him objectionable. Hearsey was admonished for addressing a letter to the ex-Peshwa's Dewan "the contents of which were highly improper, as being calculated to unsettle His Highness's mind and excite in him hopes which

<sup>27</sup> Pol. Cons. 26 March, 1832 (42).

<sup>28</sup> Foreign Miscellaneous, 1832, pp. 307-15.

can never be fulfilled". He was informed of the Governor-General's displeasure as he had acted in a manner "quite inconsistent with the obligations of" his "duty as a subject and dependent of the Government". He was further warned that if he were "again detected in this or any similar intrigue", he would be punished with the forfeiture of his pension or some other appropriate measure.<sup>29</sup>

This was the end of Hearsey's "intrigue". It was foolish to try to communicate with Baji Rao, and raise hopes which could never be fulfilled. The Governor-General would never think of granting a jagir to Baji Rao in the Deccan or elsewhere. It is difficult to believe that Hearsey's unnamed friend could influence the Court or Directors or the Board of Control and produce the desired result. We do not know what Hearsey expected to gain for himself except, possibly, some financial return if the prospect was successful. The Governor-General's warning evidently produced some effect. Hearsey was never again implicated in the Peshwa's affairs and enjoyed his pension for the rest of his life. After his death in August, 1840, his sister Harriet petitioned the Government for the continuation of the pension to herself and "other members of his family".<sup>30</sup> Hearsey's sons were in the military service of the ruler of Oudh, and his daughters were married. The application was forwarded to the Court of Directors, with a recommendation from the Government. But the Court of Directors concluded that as the children of Hearsey were provided for, "the claim of his sister" could not be entertained.<sup>31</sup>

About the end of the year 1838, troubles began again, and this time the Raja of Satara was involved. Raja Pratap Singh of Satara was the direct descendant of Shivaji. After the battle of Ashti on the 20th February, 1818, he became a prisoner of the English. In April, he

<sup>29</sup> Pol. Cons. 21 May. 1832 (66).

<sup>30</sup> Rev. Cons. 16 Nov. 1840 (16, 17).

<sup>31</sup> Rev. Cons. 1843 (26, 27).

was installed with great pomp, and Grant Duff was appointed the Resident at Satara. He was also instructed to manage the state till the Raja had sufficient training to carry on his own administration. Raja Pratap Singh was regarded as a very clever young man. At the time of his capture he was about twenty, "good-humoured and frank, and not destitute of intelligence".<sup>32</sup> Grant Duff's schooling proved very successful and, in 1822, before Duff retired, the entire administration of the state was handed over to Pratap Singh. Elphinstone evidently had a very high opinion about him. In December, 1822, he wrote to his friend Strachey that he "must tell" him "what a good fellow the Raja of Satara" was.<sup>33</sup> Four years later, he wrote to Mrs. Stewart Mackenzie: the Raja "is the most civilized Mahratta I ever met with, has his country in excellent order, and everything, to his roads and aqueducts, in a style that would do credit to a European".<sup>34</sup> But, eventually, the Raja became a disappointment to his patrons. In 1836, the Governor-General learned with dismay that the Raja was attempting to corrupt the troops stationed at Satara, and organise a general rising against the Company. A Commission looked into the evidence, but was not fully convinced of his complicity. It was, however, clear that there was no lack of hostile feelings against the British, and the Raja's minister and one of his advisers were imprisoned. Next year, an attempt to rise against the British power with the help of the Portuguese, and Appa Saheb of Nagpur, was reported.<sup>35</sup> It was decided to remove Pratap Singh. But before he actually left Satara, some unauthorised correspondence between him and the ex-Peshwa was believed to have taken place.

In December, 1838, Lord Auckland wrote to the Commissioner that Baji Rao should be apprised of the discovery of "unauthorised intercourse between him and the

<sup>32</sup> *Papers re Pindarry and Marhatta Wars*, p. 238.

<sup>33</sup> Colebrooke, *Life of Elphinstone*, ii p. 143.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>35</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, XIX p. 310.



Raja of Satara, and the determination of the British Government to discountenance entirely proceedings of this kind". He should also be reminded that he was "not in a position to incur the displeasure of the British Government."<sup>36</sup> The Commissioner had an interview with Baji Rao on the 28th December, when Ramchandra Pant and Bapu Godebole were also present. Baji Rao denied that he had carried on negotiations with the Raja or appointed Janardan Narayan Despande as his agent for the purpose.<sup>37</sup> Manson himself believed that Baji Rao probably had nothing to do with the reported intercourse. During this conversation his "manner was quite free from all embarrassment"; on the other hand, Janardan Narayan who formerly lived at Bithur bore "a very indifferent character". It was possible, Manson wrote, that Janardan Narayan might "not have had the direct sanction of Bajee Rao, but was prompted by his desire of obtaining money from the Rajah of Sattarah, and relying on Bajee Rao's not disapproving of the use made by him of his name", should he succeed really in establishing an intercourse between the Raja and the ex-Peshwa.<sup>38</sup> In less than a year's time, Pratap Singh was deposed and taken to Benares, and no further notice was taken of the incident.

In the same year, a more widespread conspiracy was reported. On the 29th April, 1839, Manson informed the Governor-General that he had discovered a conspiracy for "the removal of the Maharajah from this place to the other side of the Jumna in progress to the Dukhan via Gwalior".<sup>39</sup> The Commissioner also learnt on "tolerable good authority" that attempts had been made for the last three months to collect men in Oudh territory. Their number was differently estimated, and varied from four thousand to ten thousand. A horseman was promised a salary of thirty-five rupees a month, and two months'

<sup>36</sup> Sec. Pro. 10 April, 1839 (6).

<sup>37</sup> Sec. Pro. 8 May, 1839 (41).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Sec. Pro. 3 July, 1839 (85).

salary in advance on crossing the Ganges. Manson preferred to wait till any overt act was committed by the conspirators. But the news of the discovery of the plot leaked out, and on the 25th April, Baji Rao informed his Dewan that he had received intelligence of people collecting in Oudh for the purpose of plundering his treasury and instructed him to take suitable action. Consequently, Piraji Raja, who was believed to be the leader of the conspiracy, was arrested. He was a great favourite of the ex-Peshwa, and was the captain of his bodyguards. Besides him, five other persons were placed under arrest. Baji Rao denied all knowledge of the conspiracy, and left Ramchandra to deal with Piraji and other conspirators. The Commissioner was not sure if the real object was the removal of the ex-Peshwa, or the plunder of his treasury, or the obtaining of money under the false pretence of payment of the armed men taken under his service.<sup>40</sup> But both Manson and Ramchandra agreed that the ex-Peshwa was "aware of what was transacting", and believed them to be measures "for effecting his escape towards Poona". There was, however, no evidence justifying extreme measures against him; but the Commissioner suggested that in case the Governor-General considered it proper to express his displeasure and disapprobation at the ex-Peshwa's conduct, the guns presented to him some time ago might be withdrawn.<sup>41</sup> The Governor-General would have found it difficult to believe that Baji Rao was "personally implicated" in this but "for the recollection of former plots" in which he was "led to take a part". The activities of his favourite Piraji also strengthened "the suspicion that it could not have been undertaken" without his knowledge. But there was "no sufficient proof", and he appeared "to have provided against such a contingency by himself giving information" of the levy of armed men. So the Governor-General did not want to "consider this

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



affair as attaching to Baji Rao any belief that he was cognisant of it before the circumstances were discovered". Manson was, however, instructed to inform Baji Rao that the Governor-General was extremely surprised at the assembly of armed men near his residence, and that a recurrence "of any similar cause of alarm or suspicion in future" would compel the Governor-General "to adopt restrictive measures of precaution". Manson's suggestion that the guns should be withdrawn found no favour with the Governor-General.<sup>42</sup>

The conspiracy was regarded as absurd by Lord Auckland. But about this time something happened, which gave "a more serious complexion" to this incident, and compelled the Governor-General to examine the affair more closely. On the 6th May, 1839, a Brahmin named Srinivas Rao asked for an interview with Caulfield, Resident at Lucknow, and told him a very interesting story. Srinivas related that he was approached at Hyderabad by two of Baji Rao's agents. They offered him an employment at Cawnpore on a salary of two hundred and fifty rupees a month, and secretly brought him to Bithur. There he was told by Baji Rao that Ramchandra Pant was "in league with Captain Manson". At their advice he saw the Dewan and told him that he was a Brahmin and had been robbed on the way.<sup>43</sup> Under this pretext he stayed at Bithur for about a year. He was then instructed to see Macnaghten<sup>44</sup> in Calcutta and secure Ramchandra's confinement and Manson's removal from Bithur. He left for Calcutta with two other persons, and was promised three hundred rupees as his monthly expenses. He was also permitted to spend one or two lakhs of rupees for gaining his object. He saw Macnaghten and others, but could not carry out the instructions, as he had

<sup>42</sup> Sec. Pro. 24 July, 1839 (69).

<sup>43</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (17).

<sup>44</sup> Sir William Hay Macnaghten, Secretary in the Secret and Political Departments, 1833-37. He accompanied Lord Bentinck and Lord Auckland on their tours in Upper India.

no credentials. He waited for ten months, but Baji Rao did not send him the letters of introduction as promised. So he left Calcutta and returned to Benares. He was directed to stay there with his family, and was granted four hundred rupees as his monthly expenses. Three months later, he again visited Bithur at Baji Rao's invitation, and was asked to proceed to Nepal as the Peshwa's vakil, with one Parashuram Bania. He learnt there that negotiations were going on with the Raja of Nepal and the ruler of Burma to restore Baji Rao to the Peshwaship, on payment of two crores of rupees with which they would fight the British. This explanation seems to have convinced Srinivas. He went to Nepal and was introduced to Raghunath Rao, the "Gooru and Dewan of the Raja".<sup>45</sup> Srinivas told him that he was Baji Rao's agent and that one crore of rupees would be paid soon, and another crore after Baji Rao's restoration. He also had an interview with the ruler of Nepal, who told him that he had kept ready one lakh stands of arms and forty regiments, and if necessary he would be joined by the Chinese. He then enquired about the money. Parashuram replied that Baji Rao would send it to Benares, from where it would be brought to Nepal. Srinivas's companion Parashuram then left him and went to Burma. When the Raja of Nepal began to press Srinivas for money, he assured him that it would arrive shortly, "and passed 14 months telling him falsehood". But later on he was compelled to express his doubts about the payment, and secured the Raja's permission to return and make arrangements about it.<sup>46</sup> Srinivas did not see Manson. He went to Lucknow and prayed the Resident that arrears of his pay might be recovered from Baji Rao. He said that he possessed some "written documents" in support of his claims.

Srinivas's story made the Commissioner uneasy. He

<sup>45</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (17). The ruler of Nepal was Rajendra Vikram Shah.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

believed him "capable of manufacturing any tale", but knew that there were some elements of truth in it. The story of deception practised on him was true, though Srinivas was later on detected "holding secret intercourse" with Baji Rao and compelled to leave Bithur. Besides, it was known that secret negotiations had been carried on between Katmandu and Bithur, though details could not be discovered.<sup>47</sup> Manson asked Caulfield to detain Srinivas at Lucknow so that he might not be approached by Baji Rao's agents, and prepared a number of questions for testing the veracity of his statement. He concluded from his replies that except for "one or two discrepancies", they were "clear and satisfactory, and calculated to remove any doubts", which might have existed about his journey to Nepal. But he had no record to prove that he had been sent on a mission to Katmandu by Baji Rao.<sup>48</sup>

On the 20th May, 1839, Manson forwarded a report to the Governor-General. He pointed out that as Srinivas Rao had a bad reputation, his statement about Baji Rao's relation with the ruler of Nepal "unsupported by strong and unquestionable evidence" could not be admitted. The only thing Srinivas could possibly prove was his mission to Calcutta. But in spite of the "vagueness", "contradiction" and "entire omissions of his replies" to some of the questions, he "was not disposed to discredit the story" of his having visited Katmandu. Both he and Hodgson, the Resident at Katmandu, believed in Baji Rao's intrigues with the ruler of Nepal ; but he was doubtful if Srinivas was really one of the agents employed. He suggested that Srinivas who knew about the negotiations, might have visited Katmandu with the hope of benefiting himself and pretended to be a vakil from Baji Rao.<sup>49</sup> Three days later, Srinivas Rao was brought to Bithur and

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Manson had a better opportunity of examining him. It only strengthened his former belief that Srinivas was an impostor. The very fact that Srinivas had not applied to Baji Rao for his arrears was a strong presumption against his appointment by him. His visit to Katmandu, whatever might have induced it, "had not its origin from any instructions" given to him by the ex-Peshwa.<sup>50</sup> Before the Governor-General received this information, he had already written to the Commissioner that the character of Srinivas Rao was "so monotonously bad", his evidence "so vague" and "contradictory", that he "could not rest any important proceeding upon it and would not wish one who is so little to be trusted to be further examined".<sup>51</sup> This was followed by another letter from the Governor-General dated the 6th June, in which he wrote to the Commissioner that the character of Srinivas Rao as an impostor had been "sufficiently ascertained", and the Governor-General regretted that "so much importance should have been ever attached to his statement". He desired that Srinivas Rao should be "turned out of Bithur and not be allowed to return there".<sup>52</sup>

It is difficult to see what other step could have been taken regarding Srinivas. The Governor-General believed it would be "difficult if not inexpedient" to attempt to punish him, and it was not "desirable to add to the consequence of a person of this stamp by detaining him as a witness". But the episode did not end there.<sup>53</sup> Both the Governor-General and the Commissioner were of opinion that the intrigues which were carried on in the ex-Peshwa's name "by the persons about him", called for some measures of precaution. In his letter to the Governor-General on the 20th May, Manson had suggested that Baji Rao should not be allowed to stay outside his jagir but removed "with all his household and followers" within

<sup>50</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (19).

<sup>51</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (18).

<sup>52</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (21).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

its boundaries. In that case it would be easier to keep them under the surveillance of the Commissioner and the Dewan.<sup>54</sup> The Governor-General approved of the suggestion and asked Manson if he proposed stricter surveillance in future, and if there were sufficient buildings within the jagir for the accomodation of Baji Rao and his followers.<sup>55</sup> Manson replied that the removal of the ex-Peshwa within the jagir would prove a sufficient check and no further restraint would be necessary. There was ample space within the jagir, but as some buildings would have to be erected, the Marathas should be given sufficient time. Manson suggested that the period might be extended to the 1st June, 1840.<sup>56</sup> The Governor-General considered Manson's suggestions as "considerate and on all accounts expedient". He proposed that the occasion might be taken "to exercise immediately a degree of wholesome influence" on Baji Rao "as regards his choice of followers and adherents". Baji Rao should be told that the measure was necessary "in consequence of the character of many persons about him" on whom he unfortunately placed his confidence. Their "abuse of his favour and his friendship" had brought discredit on him, and had "proved on more than one occasion seriously displeasing" to the Government.<sup>57</sup>

Ramchandra Pant visited Baji Rao on the 30th July, and informed him of the Governor-General's decision. Baji Rao heard the news "with the greatest dismay", and exclaimed that his "*izzat* and *hurmat*" were gone. He "even shed tears" at the thought of leaving his residence, and implored Ramchandra to try to avert the measure.<sup>58</sup> Next day, the Commissioner had an interview with Baji Rao, in which Ramchandra, Bapu Godebole and Govind Rao were also present. The Commissioner explained to

<sup>54</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (17).

<sup>55</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (18).

<sup>56</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (25).

<sup>57</sup> Sec. Pro. 7 Aug., 1839 (26).

<sup>58</sup> Sec. Pro. 4 Dec., 1839 (6).



Baji Rao that this was a measure in which "his real interests were consulted", which without injuring his "*izzat* and *hurmat*" was, "if possible, calculated to augment them and increase his consequence". Under the new arrangement he would exercise complete control over his followers. Manson referred to the personal risk in addition to the loss of property which he was incurring by living outside his jagir. The Governor-General, Manson explained, did not believe him connected in any way with the intrigues of his followers, but if he continued to stay outside the jagir, the Government might be compelled to adopt "such restrictive and precautionary measures as might prove derogatory to his dignity and interfere with his personal comfort". Manson also suggested that his removal within his jagir "might be supposed to emanate from himself", and that some little time might be allowed to pass before his new residence within the jagir should be commenced.<sup>59</sup>

Baji Rao did not prove very difficult. When the interview began, Manson found that "his countenance betrayed a good deal of anxiety and care", but it "cleared up greatly", and towards the end he assumed "even a cheerful appearance". He assented immediately to the wishes of the Governor-General, and observed that "all he was anxious for" was the "saving of his *hurmat*", which he had placed in the hands of the Commissioner.<sup>60</sup> Next day, however, Ramchandra saw Manson, and told him that Baji Rao was desirous of having the period extended, and suggested that ten years be allowed. Manson replied that it was a very long period, but assured that the period might be extended to a few months after June, 1840. In his letter to the Governor-General on the 1st August, 1839, the Commissioner expressed the hope that there would be no further difficulty regarding this measure. Baji Rao had "a fancy for building", and the "erection of his new

Ibid.

Ibid.



residence would afford him amusement, and occupy . . .  
a good deal of his time and attention to the exclusion of  
subjects less innocent and useful".<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER VI

### BENGAL REGULATION I OF 1832

On the arrival of Baji Rao at Bithur, the Commissioner was faced with two questions. What would be the nature of Baji Rao's authority over his followers, and how far were these men to be amenable to the jurisdiction of the Company's lawcourts? At the time of his surrender, the ex-Peshwa had been deserted by many of his generals, but even in 1819, when he had settled at Bithur, the number of his followers roughly amounted to 3000 men. Low, as well as Baji Rao, felt that some kind of regulation should be passed without delay, determining the extent of his authority over his followers.

The earliest reference to such a regulation is found in a letter written by the Governor-General to John Malcolm in July, 1818. After explaining his views on the terms granted to Baji Rao, Lord Hastings discussed certain points relating to the ex-Peshwa's life in exile. He was "to lead a life of privacy, and . . . his intercourse with the natives of rank should be restricted within the narrowest limits". His followers should be placed under the jurisdiction of the lawcourts, but his own person and those of his near relatives should be exempt from the operation of the Company's law.<sup>1</sup> During his march to Hindusthan, Baji Rao repeatedly wanted to discuss with the Governor-General questions of his personal freedom and the authority he might be allowed to exercise over his men, and asked permission to send his agents Ramchandra Pant and Anna Desmukh to Calcutta. But this was not permitted, and Low came to an agreement with Baji Rao that the application for sending vakils should be considered after Baji Rao had settled at Bithur.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sec. Cons. 24 July, 1818 (24).

<sup>2</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. Low to Metcalfe, 28 July, 1820. B.R.O. ; Sec. Pol. Diary, 13 Sept., 1820. B.R.O.

Baji Rao's attempts to place his case before the Governor-General through his own agents did not succeed. But Low was equally anxious that a definite policy be laid down regarding the ex-Peshwa and the management of his retinue. As early as March, 1819, he had drawn up a tentative plan. He prepared a memorandum in which he made the following suggestion. Baji Rao should be allowed to punish or imprison the offenders where his adherents alone were the parties. But he should not "have the power of taking either limb or life". The officer residing at Bithur might be authorised to try and decide all complaints brought against the Peshwa's followers by subjects of the British Government. Similarly, when complaints were made by Baji Rao's people against the subjects of the Company, such cases should be tried by the judge of the district. Baji Rao was particularly anxious that his followers might not be liable to be summoned by the Company's civil courts. Low considered that except in a few cases the Governor-General might agree to his prayer. This arrangement, however, might lead to difficulties in getting the evidence of the complaining parties. So it was proposed that a regulation might be passed deciding that depositions of Baji Rao's followers when recorded by the British agent at Bithur should be regarded as good evidence in a court of law. It was understood that these arrangements would not apply to Baji Rao himself or "any of the immediate members of his family". They could only be dealt with according to a special resolution of the Supreme Government. Low further suggested that if the Government generally agreed to his proposal, some temporary arrangement might be made at first as an experimental measure, and the ex-Peshwa informed that it would continue so long as his followers behaved properly.<sup>3</sup>

It should be observed that Low's memorandum contained only the outline of a plan. He merely pointed out

<sup>3</sup> Pol. Pro. 28 Sept., 1827 (50).

the main principles on which a more detailed scheme could be built up. On the 17th May, 1819, Metcalfe, who was then the Secretary to the Government, wrote to Low suggesting two alternative courses. According to one arrangement, the plot of land occupied by Bajī Rao and his followers was to be "put on the footing of a cantonment". All "petty cases" in it were to be decided by the Commissioner while important cases between Bajī Rao's followers were to be tried in the cantonment, but in all important cases the proceedings were to be transmitted to the provincial Court of Circuit or to a suitable officer in the judicial department for confirmation or amendment. No sentence could be carried into execution without such previous confirmation. In "graver cases" arising between the followers of Bajī Rao and British subjects, the trial was to be conducted by the magistrate.<sup>4</sup> Metcalfe did not make it clear if "petty cases", which would be tried by the Commissioner, included cases between Marathas at Bithur and British subjects; nor did he suggest what law was to be applied in such cases. Metcalfe's second suggestion was that the "Civil Station at Bithoor should, within certain defined limits, be conferred as a jagir for life on Bajī Rao, and that within these limits he or his principal officers acting under his authority, should administer justice and superintend the police without the control or intervention of any British authority". Metcalfe explained that the Governor-General-in-Council had not come to any decision as to the effectiveness of either of these schemes. Low was asked to consider them along with Robertson, the acting magistrate of Cawnpore, and record their views on the "expediency or inexpediency of adopting either of them". They might suggest any other scheme if they considered it better suited for the purpose. They were also instructed to submit a joint report containing their opinions "both with regard to the principle by which the

<sup>4</sup> Pol. Pro. 28 Sept., 1827 (50) enclosure.

system should be regulated and the manner by which" it might be "most expediently brought into operation".<sup>5</sup>

Low and Robertson jointly prepared a report and submitted it on the 12th June, 1819. They considered that though Baji Rao was anxious to exercise his authority over his followers, yet he would not object to a "certain degree of interference in their management", provided this was done solely by the Commissioner. They did not favour the idea of granting to the ex-Peshwa "unlimited exercise of sovereign power" within his jagir, for two reasons. Baji Rao might turn indifferent to the maintenance of peace among his men; in that case his jagir would be a retreat for offenders from the neighbouring districts. Secondly, the Government would be "deprived of the means of hereafter modifying such parts of the original system" as might require alteration in future. The principle which Low and Robertson recommended was "giving as much attention to Baji Rao's feelings" as was "compatible with the preservation of good order". It was of "combining the greatest possible degree of courtesy and attention to the feelings and prejudices of the ex-Peshwa with the fewest concessions". With this idea they suggested the following arrangement. A plot of land of about two square miles including the late civil station should be separated from the jurisdiction of the zilla of Cawnpore and set apart for the residence of the ex-Peshwa and his followers. The Commissioner at Bithur should exercise the power of a magistrate, and should be empowered to prevent and punish crimes, and exercise full control over the police. All persons residing or apprehended within this jurisdiction should be placed under his authority. The Commissioner would have the power to punish petty offences with fine, imprisonment or stripes. In cases of serious crimes committed by Baji Rao's "immediate adherents" the trial should be conducted by the Commissioner, and the proceedings together with his opinion of

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

the case sent to the Nizam Adalat in Calcutta. If a serious crime was committed by a person other than a follower of Baji Rao, he should be handed over to the magistrate of Cawnpore. In cases where the crime was committed by one of Baji Rao's followers outside the Commissioner's jurisdiction, he should be apprehended and delivered to the Commissioner by the magistrate. Civil suits where the defendants were followers of Baji Rao should be decided by the Commissioner. Should the plaintiff be a follower of Baji Rao, the case would be heard by the Commissioner, provided the defendant was a resident within the Commissioner's jurisdiction and the cause of action originated therein. In cases preferred by Baji Rao's followers against persons living outside the Company's jurisdiction, the complaint should be forwarded by the Commissioner to the district judge. It was understood that the above rules were not applicable to Baji Rao or any member of his family. If any crime was committed by any of them he should be "dealt with according to a special resolution of the Government". The Commissioner should generally refrain from "exercising the authority vested in him", and Baji Rao should be allowed "to punish petty offences amongst his followers in his own way", provided the "punishments were commensurate with the offences committed", and did not "extend to life or limb or protracted and arbitrary imprisonment". The document also laid down that at the discretion of the Commissioner, Baji Rao's followers might be excused from personally appearing as witnesses in the Company's law-courts, and their evidence might be recorded before the Commissioner. The orders proposed were applicable to all persons residing within the jagir irrespective of their relation with Baji Rao.<sup>6</sup>

It should be observed that the first scheme of Low and Robertson was in many ways similar to the arrangements

<sup>6</sup> Pol. Pro. 3 July, 1819 (6r).



suggested by Low in March, 1819. It placed all residents within the jagir under the control of the Commissioner. The Commissioner was also empowered to try Baji Rao's followers for offences committed outside, if the crimes were regarded as serious. Though nothing is stated clearly, it is almost evident that the trial in the Commissioner's court would be similar to a trial in a court of the Company, and the law would be that generally applied in British India. Baji Rao was to be allowed to punish petty offences "in his own way". Apparently he would apply the customary Maratha law.

The joint report of Low and Robertson was approved by the Government, and Low thought that the publication of a regulation was only a question of time. The thanadar of Bithur was placed under his order, and the Commissioner decided all questions in which Baji Rao's followers were concerned. The Marathas were treated as if they were not subject to the Company's courts of law. All this was obviously done in the "immediate expectation of the enactment" of a regulation.<sup>7</sup> A letter written by the Commissioner to the Governor-General's secretary on the 28th July, 1820, tells us that he had constantly hoped "from week to week and from month to month" that a regulation would be published.<sup>8</sup> Low was informed that a regulation "was actually about to be passed", that "the Marquis of Hastings had personally authorised it", and that it would be shortly "put in force".<sup>9</sup> But various factors intervened. In the beginning of 1822, Low was seriously ill, and for more than one year he was outside India on leave. Colonel Blacker who temporarily succeeded him, wrongly conceived that everything had to be postponed till his return.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile Lord Hastings had

<sup>7</sup> Pol. Cons. 28 Sept., 1827 (49).

<sup>8</sup> Poona Diary 1820-21, vol. 22/22. B.R.O. ; Sec. Pol. Diary, 13 Sept., 1820. B.R.O.

<sup>9</sup> Pol. Cons. 28 Sept., 1827 (49).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

resigned. He returned to England with the impression that the regulation would be passed in due course. In his *Summary of Administration* written on his way home, he gave a picture of the ex-Peshwa administering justice over his guards "in all cases not capital".<sup>11</sup> When Johnson succeeded Blacker as Commissioner, he was repeatedly entreated by the Marathas to press the Government for the regulation. In September, 1823, he wrote to the Governor-General that certain "privileges conceded to the Maharajah Baji Rao" might be "secured by a legislative enactment". He pointed out that under the existing state of things Baji Rao's followers might be compelled to appear as witnesses in civil and criminal courts, a practice which they detested and regarded as a degradation.<sup>12</sup> Johnson also forwarded the draft of a regulation by which persons belonging to the ex-Peshwa's "family establishment or camp should not be indiscriminately liable to be compelled to appear" in the courts "to give evidence". It provided that summons for the attendance of witnesses in the courts, or before the collector of revenue, should be served through the Commissioner. If the Commissioner thought that the person required to give evidence belonged to such high rank or was connected with the ex-Peshwa in such a manner that his attendance in court was undesirable, he would communicate his opinion to the court issuing the summons. Under such circumstances the court might ask the Commissioner "to take the deposition of the witness . . . or his replies to any written queries". Such deposition or answers to queries should be sent to the court with the Commissioner's seal or signature, and such evidence would be regarded as valid by the authorities in all matters, civil, criminal or revenue. It was clearly understood that the Government reserved to itself the "power of directing the personal attendance and examination" of a witness in a court of law, should it appear that a strict

<sup>11</sup> Hastings, *Summary of Administration*, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Pol. Pro. 31 Oct., 1823 (51).

adherence to the provisions of this regulation might injure "the interests of the state or the ends of justice".<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted that the measures proposed by Johnson covered much less ground than the previous ones. It did not say anything about the authority of the law courts over Baji Rao's followers. In anticipation of the regulation, the practice had grown up of justice being administered at Bithur jointly by the Commissioner and Baji Rao. Johnson only proposed a regulation by which certain persons in Baji Rao's camp might be exempted from appearing in court to give evidence, and allowed to depose before the Commissioner. It was naturally supposed that there would be no difficulty about its publication. But it shared the same fate as the first regulation. The proposed regulation of June, 1819, had not come into force because the Government had maintained silence about it, and nothing came of Johnson's draft of October, 1823, because it was overthrown by the Sadar Dewani Adalat.<sup>14</sup> The Adalat considered that the "power proposed to be allowed to the Commissioner to administer oaths" to some of Baji Rao's followers "and thus prevent the necessity of their being sent to the Zilla Court", would produce general discontent.<sup>15</sup> Low commented at a later date that the decision of the Sadar Dewani Adalat was wrong. He held that it had no knowledge "of the peculiar circumstances of the case", and that the question had not been properly referred to it. He felt that the matter was "more a point of political necessity than a question of judicial expediency".<sup>16</sup>

By September, 1825, Low had returned from his vacation, and began to press the Government for the publication of the regulation. In a despatch addressed to the Governor-General, he referred to Baji Rao's entreaties for

<sup>13</sup> Pol. Pro. 31 Oct., 1823 (52).

<sup>14</sup> Pol. Cons. 28 Sept., 1827 (49).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

some immediate measure for the management of his followers. Baji Rao had complained that the Commissioner's "promises" to him were never fulfilled. During Low's term of office some kind of arrangement had been made with the judicial authorities at Cawnpore, and Baji Rao was free from interference by the law courts. But while Low was on leave there was a change for the worse, and the "people of the Adalat" were vexing him and his followers "every now and then with mere trifles". His followers were at the mercy of the "enmity of a paltry thanadar". Baji Rao prayed that his followers might continue under the Commissioner's authority but should be exempted from the jurisdiction of the district courts. They should not be "subject to two English masters".<sup>17</sup>

In the same letter, Low also discussed how far the Government was "bound by previous assurances" to the ex-Peshwa "to comply with his wishes". He referred to two letters, written by Malcolm to the Governor-General on the 8th July, and the 30th August, 1818, and a third written by Adam to Low on the 17th October, 1818. The trend of all these letters was that as long as Baji Rao or his officers maintained effective control over his followers, they would be free from the jurisdiction of the law courts, or the intervention of the Company's officers. Accordingly, Baji Rao had been assured that "he should not be annoyed . . . by any interference from the judicial establishment", and his Dewan Ramchandra Pant had continued to administer justice over the Marathas with the help of the Commissioner. This arrangement was tacitly approved by the Government. Low felt that a regulation should be immediately published to put an end to the "inconvenience both to the Judge and Commissioner from the present want of

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Baji Rao referred to the thanadar of Bithur. He "made himself very offensive to the ex-Peshwa and his establishment", but was allowed to continue till September, 1832, when he was removed to another situation by order of the Governor-General. Manson calls him "an obnoxious individual". Pol. Cons. 29 Oct., 1832 (153). Foreign Miscellaneous, letters on pp. 369, 379.

any definite rule". If it was agreed to accept the regulation proposed jointly by Johnson and Robertson, Low suggested that a paragraph should be added to it "ordering that when both parties in any case are either in the pay of Baji Rao, or in that of any of his followers", the case should be "entirely left to the Maharajah under the superintendence of the Commissioner".<sup>18</sup>

The Government took no notice of Low's letter, and for about two years it was left unanswered. On the 8th July, 1826, Low's successor Johnson sent a reminder. He brought to the notice of the Governor-General that letters written by Low in October, 1825, had not been replied to, that Baji Rao was suffering great inconvenience, and that he was "especially anxious" for the publication "of some regulation relieving him from the irksome necessity of sending his followers and adherents before the Magistrate".<sup>19</sup> This letter also failed to attract the Governor-General's attention, for we come across another reminder written one year after this. On the 4th July, 1827, Johnson again informed the authorities in Calcutta that no reply had been received to the Commissioner's letters, and that Baji Rao was anxious that a regulation "might be passed, enabling him, to a certain extent, to administer justice to his own adherents and followers". Johnson added that as there was "no defined regulation" for the guidance of the magistrate of Cawnpore, he was "placed in a very delicate situation and must find it impossible to act in a manner consistent with his own duty, and at the same time to avoid inflicting a wound on the feelings of Baji Rao".<sup>20</sup>

This letter at last succeeded in attracting Lord Amherst's notice. A letter written by the Deputy Secretary to George Swinton, Secretary in the Secret and Political Department, dated the 8th September, 1827, explained the

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Pol. Pro. 21 July, 1826 (45).

<sup>20</sup> Pol. Pro. 20 July, 1827 (19).



Governor-General's views. The Governor-General considered that the Government was in no way "pledged to allow to Bajji Rao greater privileges and immunities within the Company's Provinces" than the existing ones. But "it was long the intention" of the Government "to enact a regulation, which should confer on Bajee Rao and the principal members of his family, certain personal exemptions and a limited extent of jurisdiction over his own followers". Some of those privileges were already being enjoyed by Bajji Rao. But as this "undefined state of things" had caused "some practical inconvenience" which might lead to "serious embarrassment" and as the Commissioners bore testimony to the ex-Peshwa's "uniform good conduct", the Governor-General wanted "to comply with Bajee Rao's earnest solicitations for the promulgation of the long expected regulation".<sup>21</sup> The Deputy Secretary forwarded the draft of a regulation which the Governor-General considered "best adapted to the circumstances of the case."<sup>22</sup> A committee consisting of the magistrate, the collector of Cawnpore and the Commissioner at Bithur, was ordered to be formed for settling the boundaries of the jagir, and carrying on negotiations with the owners of properties within the area.<sup>23</sup>

A copy of this despatch was sent to the Judicial Department "for further consideration",<sup>24</sup> and the committee was formed in October, 1827.<sup>25</sup> But its course did not run smooth. The Government had waited for seven years before coming to a decision and it took the committee five years to frame the regulation and publish it. It became clear from the beginning that the committee was not functioning properly. Johnson, during whose term of office the committee was appointed, left Bithur about the end of 1828. For one year no permanent arrangement was

<sup>21</sup> Pol. Pro. 28 Sept., 1827 (57).

<sup>22</sup> Pol. Pro. 28 Sept., 1827 (57, 58).

<sup>23</sup> Pol. Pro. 28 Sept., 1827 (57).

<sup>24</sup> Pol. Pro. 28 Sept., 1827 (58).

<sup>25</sup> Pol. Pro. 2 Nov., 1827 (52).



made to fill up the vacancy and continue the work. In the beginning of 1830, when Cooke became Commissioner, he found that very little work had been done. On the 13th May, 1830, he informed James Wimys, collector of Cawnpore, that the Government had asked for a report on the proposals made by the committee.<sup>26</sup> On the 14th August, he again wrote to the collector asking him to adopt proper measures for a speedy settlement of the boundaries of the proposed jagir. He felt that they had achieved very little, and after three years, the prospect of a final settlement was "as far as ever from completion".<sup>27</sup> But the committee sat idle for the whole of the next year, and no progress was made.

About the end of April, 1831, Cooke complained to the Governor-General of the "determined inattention" of the collector, and prayed for his intervention "in preventing further delay". As it was extremely difficult "to obtain the slightest attention from the Collector", he prayed that the collector be required to submit the report of the committee. He stated that in spite of his several letters the collector had "remained perseveringly silent", while Baji Rao repeatedly urged him to represent to the Governor-General, the "great inconvenience and vexation" he had continually suffered.<sup>28</sup> This letter probably had some effect, for in six months' time, the committee drew up its final report. Meanwhile Cooke had died, and on the suggestion of his successor, Major Faithful, the services of Low were requisitioned. Low who was then the Resident at Lucknow, arrived at Cawnpore on the 2nd October, and next day, along with Major Faithful, examined the site of the proposed jagir. Thompson, the magistrate of Cawnpore, also paid a visit to Bithur. Some mistakes in the old surveys were corrected and it was agreed to accept the boundary lines previously suggested by Robertson and

<sup>26</sup> Pol. Pro. 13 May, 1831 (83).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Low. The committee only recommended certain modifications to the western boundary, where during the past twelve years such changes had occurred that a "contraction of limits" was found necessary. With this limitation, the boundaries of the proposed jagir were fixed as follows. It was separated from the town of Bithur on the north by a high road and a ravine; on the east by a stream of the Ganges; on the south by a ravine near the village of Romel; a road from Romel joining that village with the village of Mandhana and uniting it with a broad road on the west, formed its south-western and western boundaries. The regulation was formally passed, and it was suggested that the Commissioner should have certain special powers; but they were to be exercised with proper care and discretion. It was further agreed that the Commissioner should have appellate jurisdiction over the courts in the jagir, or at least the power to entertain petitions. He should be directed to visit local jails, and monthly lists of awards in civil and criminal cases might be prepared and submitted for his inspection. In short, he was to have a superintending power over the proceedings of the Maratha law courts.<sup>29</sup>

The Bengal Regulation I, as it was called, came into force on the 7th February, 1832. The preamble explained that a tract of land had been granted as jagir to Maharaja Baji Rao and that it had been "deemed expedient that the operation of the laws and regulations and the jurisdiction of the civil and criminal courts of judicature shall cease to extend" to that jagir; accordingly a new set of rules was enacted. The following were the main changes introduced by the regulation:

1. The jurisdiction of the civil and criminal courts and the operation of the general regulations were not to extend to the jagir granted to Baji Rao.

2. The civil and criminal administration of the jagir should be carried on by Baji Rao, subject to such control

<sup>29</sup> Foreign Miscellaneous, 1831, letter on pp. 213-24.

as might be prescribed by the Governor-General-in-Council from time to time.

3. Every person residing within the jagir should be regarded as "an adherent and retainer of the Maharajah" and any dispute "as to the right of jurisdiction over a person claiming to be so considered or the reverse" should be referred to the Commissioner and finally decided by him.

4. The regulation, however, did not preclude the Company's courts from taking cognizance of any crime committed by Baji Rao's adherents outside the defined limits of the jagir.

5. All communications or references to the ex-Peshwa should be transacted through the Commissioner, and replies recorded through him.

6. Lastly, it was provided that Regulation V, 1809, Regulation VIII, 1813 (Section VI), Regulation I, 1823, and Regulation VIII, 1829, were applicable to "Native subjects of the British Government", who might be "charged with crimes and misdemeanour committed within the limits of the jagheer".<sup>30</sup>

It should be remembered that the regulation did little more than acknowledge the state of things already in existence at Bithur. Prior to its enactment the limited power that Baji Rao exercised over his followers rested on convention, and very much depended on the pleasure of the Commissioner and the authorities at Cawnpore. Baji Rao himself felt that his position depended "on the mercy of a paltry thanadar".<sup>31</sup> The regulation freed him from this unenviable position and established his authority on a surer and legal footing. Among the Maratha population the regulation appears to have been popular. Manson wrote to the Governor-General on the 18th June, 1832, that the Marathas who had built houses and resided outside Baji Rao's jurisdiction were anxious

<sup>30</sup> Bengal Regulation I of 1832.

<sup>31</sup> Pol. Cons. 28 Sept., 1827 (49).

to be treated as if "they were residing within his jagir", and that at the Commissioner's suggestion signatures of such persons were being collected.<sup>32</sup> The same letter informed the Governor-General that Dewan Ramchandra Pant had asked the Commissioner "to apply to Government for a Regulation exempting all the Maharajah's followers residing without the limits of the jageer" from the operation of the Company's laws, "by extending the benefits of the lately granted Regulations to them".<sup>33</sup> The Commissioner and the Dewan were "aware of the difficulty of suggesting any feasible plan", because the Marathas were very much scattered in the town of Bithur and the neighbouring villages.<sup>34</sup> The Government treated this project with coldness, and it does not appear that any modification in the regulation was seriously contemplated.

There is no doubt that the regulation as it stood removed a long felt want and worked to the general satisfaction. A list drawn up by the Commissioner in 1837, gives the number of cases decided within the jagir without any reference to the Commissioner. In 1832, these cases numbered 46; in 1833, 47; in 1835, 56. In 1836, there was a sharp rise to 100; while in 1837, the number fell to 89.<sup>35</sup> The number of petitions presented to the Commissioner was much less, and altogether only 78 were brought before him upto 1837.<sup>36</sup> On several occasions the Commissioner had difficulties in determining if particular cases should be decided by him or by the ex-Peshwa. A few examples of such apparent conflict of jurisdiction may be given.

On the night of the 24th January, 1833, a robbery was committed within Baji Rao's jagir. Eleven of his followers were wounded, and treasure amounting to 12000 gold mohurs, 7000 rupees and some silver vessels were taken away. It is not clear from the Commis-

<sup>32</sup> Pol. Pro. 9 July, 1832 (108).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Pol. Cons. 4 April, 1838 (85).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

sioner's letters if the robbers were later on arrested, but immediately after the incident there was some difference of opinion about the form of trial. Reporting the incident to the Governor-General the Commissioner communicated that "in the event of their apprehension", it was "desirable to transfer the case to the Magistrate's Court at Cawnpore", but that Baji Rao was "strongly opposed to its being removed from under his cognisance". His reasons probably were that it would be derogatory to his position and newly acquired importance; he probably also thought that if the investigation was carried on by his own men he had a better chance of recovering his property.<sup>37</sup> Baji Rao had hardly any ground for his contention. Apparently the robbery was committed by persons who were not adherents of Baji Rao. It is clear from the regulation that Baji Rao's authority did not extend to outsiders. He could execute his power only if two conditions were fulfilled— if the crime was committed within the jagir, and if the offenders resided within the jagir or were in his service. The Governor-General decided that the crime was not one which could be tried by the ex-Peshwa, and informed the Commissioner that "no other course" could be legally "followed than that of making over the offenders when seized to the Magistrate of Cawnpore".<sup>38</sup>

Another incident took place shortly after, which led to further discussions regarding the ex-Peshwa's jurisdiction. The person involved in this case was one Sakharam Pant, a treasurer of Baji Rao. He had in his custody "treasure in gold and silver to the amount of Rupees six lacs eighty-six thousand one hundred and eighty-eight", besides some shawls and valuable articles. It was reported to the Commissioner that he had "abused the trust reposed in him", and in order "to screen himself" from the discovery of the theft, had arranged an "attack by a body of dacoits on the treasury under his charge". An enquiry was made

<sup>37</sup> Pol. Pro. 19 Feb., 1833 (89).

<sup>38</sup> Pol. Pro. 19 Feb., 1833 (91).



and it was found that more than one lakh and thirty-eight thousand rupees were missing, and eight thousand gold mohurs had been carried to the treasurer's house. There was hardly any doubt of Sakharam's guilt. During the enquiry he was taken to Ramchandra Pant's house where he made a full confession. It transpired that Sakharam was a money-lender and in the course of his own business he had used his master's money. He could not account for a sum of about thirty-six thousand rupees, but the amount given on loan to persons at Bithur and some of Baji Rao's followers exceeded one lakh and two thousand rupees. Of this sum, eighteen thousand rupees alone were paid to a merchant in the town of Bithur. He made false entries in his book and tried to prove that the money had been paid back to Sakharam. The Commissioner disbelieved his statement and maintained that "this debt and the falsification of his accounts" could be proved against the merchant.<sup>39</sup>

Sakharam's case had some interesting features. He was in the employment of Baji Rao but his place of residence as well as the treasury under his charge was situated outside the jagir. Was he an adherent of Baji Rao for the purpose of the regulation? Secondly, what would be the procedure if the Government decided to prosecute the merchant? If the case were tried in the Company's courts, it would be impossible to secure proper evidence as the Marathas would not depose in a court. Baji Rao had already applied for permission to prosecute in similar cases "individuals not subject to his authority, through the agency of the Government Vakeels".<sup>40</sup>

The Commissioner also suggested that he should be authorised "to investigate cases" which might "eventually be subjected to the cognisance of British Courts", and "to take the evidence" of parties "whether followers of Bajee Rao or others, whose depositions before him should be

<sup>39</sup> Pol. Pro. 26 March, 1833 (87).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



equally valid as those made before a Justice of the Peace in England''.<sup>41</sup> The Governor-General was not prepared to accept the Commissioner's suggestion. In a letter dated the 26th March he was informed that "for offences committed *within* the jagir by relatives of Baji Rao", they were "subject to His Highness's jurisdiction" and consequently Sakharam Pant was "not amenable to the Company's Courts".<sup>42</sup> Evidently the Governor-General formed a wrong impression of the case, and his letter was based on the mistaken idea that the crime was committed within the jagir. The Commissioner pointed out in reply that the treasury under Sakharam Pant's charge was situated *outside* the jagir, and so also "his place of residence" and consequently his offence was "not cognisable by Bajee Rao agreeable to the Regulation conferring the jagir".<sup>43</sup> In order to provide for such cases, the Commissioner repeated his previous suggestion that the ex-Peshwa's authority should be extended to "such of his retainers as resided beyond the limits of his present jurisdiction". Such modifications, he felt, "would have aided the ends of justice . . . and prevented troublesome and litigious appeals to the Court at Cawnpore".<sup>44</sup> It would have been interesting to follow the progress of this case, but there is no further mention of the affair in the records; and we do not know anything about its sequel.

While passing the regulation the Government had reserved to itself the right of interference. But it was hardly exercised, and the ex-Peshwa was allowed to carry on his administration as well as he could. In July, 1834, an occasion arose when the Commissioner considered it necessary to interfere. A son of the munshi of the Commissioner's office was charged with the murder of an old woman. The motive was robbery, and a silver necklace of the woman seems to have tempted the murderer. There

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Pol. Pro. 26 March, 1833 (88).

<sup>43</sup> Pol. Pro. 16 May, 1833 (72).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

was no doubt in the Commissioner's mind about the prisoner's guilt, and there were "no alleviating circumstances . . . which would warrant a recommendation for mercy".<sup>45</sup> The parties were amenable to Baji Rao's jurisdiction. The prisoner was not in his service but lived within the jagir with his father, the woman was a Maratha and "in the strictest sense" a follower of the ex-Peshwa. The Commissioner considered that as it was "a matter of life and death", it should be submitted "for the consideration and orders of Government".<sup>46</sup> The Government, however, thought otherwise, and informed the Commissioner that it had been decided not to intervene.<sup>47</sup>

The Bengal Regulation I of 1832 continued to operate during Baji Rao's life-time. It maintained its original form and subsequent attempts to modify it did not succeed. The regulation ceased to operate after the death of Baji Rao on the 28th January, 1851. On the 6th February, 1852, an act was passed repealing the regulation of 1832. By this act the ex-Peshwa's jagir was resumed. It was declared that the laws and regulations prevailing at Cawnpore should also apply to this tract. All cases "in which the cause of action arose, or the offence was committed", within the jagir, should be decided by the courts at Cawnpore, and "the general laws and regulations" operating in the districts should apply. But if it appeared that such process "would operate unjustly", the courts might "try and determine" the cases, "according to equity and good conscience".<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Pol. Pro. 14 Aug., 1834 (88).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Pol. Pro. 14 Aug., 1834 (90).

<sup>48</sup> Act IX of 1852.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LAST DAYS

When Sir John Malcolm offered his terms to the Peshwa, he probably never thought that Baji Rao was going to live another thirty-three years. Baji Rao was then forty-three, and many of the former Peshwas had been short-lived. His "feeble constitution", "debauched habits" and sedentary life in confinement, all helped to create false expectations. Before long he was regarded as a burden on the Company, and the "longevity of Badgee Row" was spoken of "as one of Malcolm's offences".<sup>1</sup> Among the Commissioners there was a practice of drawing up a periodical survey of the affairs at Bithur, and the condition of Baji Rao's health. Faithful's report in November, 1831, stated that there was no material change in the health of the ex-Peshwa after 1825. He took very little exercise. Horses and elephants were "completely discarded", and the Peshwa used to go out daily in palanquins. He used a palanquin at the Ganapati festival, and what was most unusual, even on the Dussera day he did not ride a horse. On the latter occasion "an explanation was offered", but Faithful believed that "the indulgence of an established habit" was the real cause. Manson, when he took over from Faithful in the same month seemed to be under the impression that Baji Rao would not live very long. In his recommendation of a free jagir to the ex-Peshwa, he drew the attention of the Government to "his advanced age", and hoped that "in all probability the total extent of the sacrifice" would not be much.<sup>2</sup> In 1840, it was believed that Baji Rao's life was drawing to a close, and the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces furnished the Commissioner with a set of rules for his guidance "in the event of the demise of the Peshwa". The Government was afraid that his

<sup>1</sup> Kaye, *Life of Malcolm* ii, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> Pol. Cons. 30 July, 1832 (124).

treasures might be "an object of plunder to many" who were "around him". In the event of any serious illness of the ex-Peshwa, the Commissioner was instructed to "prevent open plunder or secret embezzlement". He was advised to call upon the local military authorities to hold in readiness such troops as might be required, and also to ask the magistrate of Cawnpore for necessary help. Baji Rao was to be prevailed upon to make "an inventory of his property", and "record the mode in which he would wish to dispose of it". As soon as he would die, the Commissioner was directed to "seal up all places supposed to contain" valuable property and place "adequate guards over them". He was to act jointly with the judge, the magistrate and other influential servants of the Company, and "in the presence of the most influential attendants" of the ex-Peshwa, and, if possible, "of the claimants to the succession". It should be clearly explained to them that their claims were "restricted to the private property of the Peshwa". Subsequently, the seals should be broken, and the property made over to the person who would be declared the rightful heir by the Government.<sup>3</sup>

In 1841, Baji Rao suffered from an attack of paralysis and probably never completely recovered from the shock of that illness. But on the whole, he maintained fairly good health. The Commissioner reported in 1847: "the Maharajah whose age is now 73 years, though infirm and nearly blind, enjoys on the whole better health than could have been expected at his advanced age and after his severe illness in March 1841".<sup>4</sup> No other report of Baji Rao's health is available. But in 1850, Raghunath Rao Vinchurkar, a Maratha jagirdar, came to Cawnpore on his way to Benares. He stayed there for about two months and used to visit Baji Rao frequently. The account he has left us, though it does not directly refer to Baji Rao's state of health, suggests that there was nothing unusual,

<sup>3</sup> Pol. Cons. 23 Nov., 1840 (10).

<sup>4</sup> Pol. Cons. 6 Nov., 1847 (207).

and the ex-Peshwa had maintained the alertness of his mind. He even referred to a projected tour to Benares in the near future.<sup>5</sup> But it never came off. On the 26th January, 1851, Baji Rao became seriously ill, and the services of Dr. Mackinnon and Dr. Check were requisitioned. They examined the patient next day and found him "in a very precarious state". But they hoped that there were still chances of recovery, and prescribed "to alleviate his disorder". During the night the Peshwa was "reported to be in a dying state", and the Commissioner was sent for. The Commissioner visited him between ten and eleven o'clock, but found that there was no cause for apprehending death at the moment. He returned leaving instructions to send him a message "in case of any further alarming symptoms", or in case the Peshwa wished for his presence. In the early morning Baji Rao's condition showed no change. He died a few hours later, between eight and nine o'clock, on Tuesday, the 28th January, 1851.<sup>6</sup>

The ex-Peshwa was a much married man. Before he came to Bithur he had married six times; but most of his wives died very young, and only two of them, Varanasi Bai and Saraswati Bai, accompanied him to Bithur. Saraswati Bai who was the Peshwa's "favourite wife" died on the 3rd July, 1825, after a protracted illness.<sup>7</sup> Varanasi Bai, the senior wife, was suffering from consumption and she died on the 21st February, 1830.<sup>8</sup> Even before her death Baji Rao was thinking of getting married again. On the 24th February, 1826, the Commissioner wrote to the Governor-General that Baji Rao had informed him of "his intention of marrying again", and probably "a daughter of a resident in the Deccan named Ganpat Rao" would be selected as the bride.<sup>9</sup> In the beginning of 1827,

<sup>5</sup> *Itihas-Sangraha*, 1912-13 (Aitihāsik Sphutalekha p. 22).

<sup>6</sup> For. Cons. 26 Feb., 1858 (165-70).

<sup>7</sup> Pol. Cons. 22 July, 1825 (25).

<sup>8</sup> Pol. Cons. 6 March, 1830 (66).

<sup>9</sup> Pol. Cons. 27 July, 1826 (120). It does not seem that this marriage actually took place.



Hari Bhau Desmukh informed the Commissioner that the ex-Peshwa was "desirous of making some fresh marriages", and had "commissioned him to send several young ladies" to Bithur.<sup>10</sup> Obviously, the brides were to be selected from among them. Hari Bhau prayed that the officials at Poona might be directed "to furnish a guard of regular sepoys" for escorting them to Bithur.<sup>11</sup> In 1830, Baji Rao married Satyabhama Bai. She was the daughter of a Brahmin of the Ubhyankar family and Parashuram Pant of Konkan was her brother.<sup>12</sup> The ex-Peshwa married four other ladies at Bithur. They were Ganga Bai, Maina Bai, Sai Bai and a daughter of the Chitle family.<sup>13</sup>

But with all these marriages, Baji Rao was without a son. Varanasi Bai had given birth to an heir in 1810. He was named Vaman Rao. But he survived only five months.<sup>14</sup> A son was born to Kusa Bai in 1816, but he died after eleven days.<sup>15</sup> On the 7th June, 1827, Baji Rao adopted two sons. It was so sudden that the Governor-General could not be previously informed. When the Commissioner "hinted" that it might have been better to wait till he wrote to the Governor-General, the ex-Peshwa explained that as he was keeping very bad health, and "had been unwell for some time past", he "did not deem it proper" to put it off any longer. The Commissioner felt that under the circumstances no further comment was possible.<sup>16</sup> Both the adopted sons, Dhondo Pant *alias* Nana Saheb and Sadashiv Rao *alias* Dada Saheb, were the sons

<sup>10</sup> Poona Diary 1827, vol. 7/262. Memorandum dated 24 Jan., 1827.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Pol. Cons. 9 Feb., 1830 (50).

<sup>13</sup> Rajwade, IV p. 181; *Riyasat*, p. 541. Lady West's journal dated 5th August, 1828, contains an interesting entry: "Edward received this morning Ana Saab, and Dumderry, a Mahratta, father-in-law to the Peshwa, a good, kind old man. His son lives with the Peshwa. . . ." Drewitt, *Bombay in the days of George IV*, p. 300.

<sup>14</sup> Bom. Pol. Pro. 20 Oct., 1810, p. 5159 I.O.; *Riyasat*, p. 541.

<sup>15</sup> Bom. Pol. Pro. 25 Sept., 1816, p. 3766; 2 Oct., 1816, p. 3977. I.O.; *Riyasat*, p. 541.

<sup>16</sup> Pol. Cons. 6 July, 1827 (28).



of Madhav Rao Narayan Bhat of Bengaon near Matheran.<sup>17</sup> A third child named Gangadhar Rao *alias* Bala Saheb was also subsequently adopted.<sup>18</sup> In December, 1831, Baji Rao adopted Matia Bai, a daughter of the same Madhav Rao.<sup>19</sup>

Baji Rao paid the penalty of a long life. He had lost at Bithur many of his old adherents. Anna Desmukh died on the 26th November, 1828. Bhikaji Pant Appa died in October, 1840, and he was followed by Balaji Krishna about the end of the year.<sup>20</sup> At the time of Baji Rao's death his family consisted of his two adopted sons Nana Saheb and Bala Saheb; Pandurang Rao, the son of Sadashiv Rao who had died; two unmarried daughters, Yoga Bai and Kusuma Bai; a grand-nephew named Chimnaji Appa; and his widows, Maina Bai and Sai Bai, who during the Mutiny fled to Nepal with Nana Saheb and died there.<sup>21</sup> The name of his adopted daughter Matia Bai does not appear in the list of his relations prepared after his death, probably because she had been already married. All of them maintained "separate and expensive establishments", and in spite of considerable reduction of expenses they found it difficult to live within their income. Chimnaji Appa, however, was to inherit property worth about fifty thousand rupees, when of age. Besides the members of his family there was also a considerable number of retainers who had settled down at Bithur and depended entirely on Baji Rao for their subsistence. Baji Rao was very liberal with his presents and a large number of Brahmins had gathered at Bithur. A contemporary newspaper published the following report

<sup>17</sup> *Itihas-Sangraha*, 1912-13 (Aitihasik Sphutalekha p. 27).

<sup>18</sup> *Riyasat*, p. 542.

<sup>19</sup> Pol. Pro. 6 Jan., 1832 (39); Foreign Miscellaneous 1825-32, pp. 257-59.

<sup>20</sup> Pol. Cons. 8 Oct., 1830 (52); 16 Nov., 1840 (9); 25 Jan., 1841 (18).

<sup>21</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (9). Chimnaji Appa was the grandson of Baji Rao's younger brother Chimnaji. Kusuma Bai was also known as Bayā Bai.

from Cawnpore. "Before his decease actually took place, his residence and all the roads about it were literally filled by people anxiously enquiring after the state of his health; and some thousands of them followed his remains to the place where the ceremony of cremation was performed."<sup>22</sup> The Commissioner made a classified list of all persons living at Bithur. Some of them were not "entitled to much consideration". But there were many who were "natives of the Deccan, and generally of an advanced age". With Baji Rao's death they were "thrown out of employ" without any "prospect of obtaining service again". A few of them returned to the South, and some served under Nana Saheb, but most of them "had neither the means nor inclination to move" from Bithur. Besides, there were a number of widows, whose husbands had died in the service of the ex-Peshwa. They had no means of livelihood and consequently were supported by him.<sup>23</sup>

It was believed that Baji Rao left a considerable fortune to his heir. But this presumption was not quite correct. The ex-Peshwa had always hoped that some provision would be made for his family, and consequently was very "liberal" and "too lavish" in his expenditure. He was encouraged by "interested parties about his person" who benefited by the sums spent, particularly on buildings.<sup>24</sup> About four years before the ex-Peshwa's death, the Commissioner informed the Governor-General that Baji Rao's property would "prove to be far below the sum" that was "anticipated by those unacquainted with his habits".<sup>25</sup> In the opinion of a local writer, "the idea of his being possessed of great wealth seems to be erroneous, for it is stated that he lived upto his income . . . and in consequence has left his family ill-provided; he has left a debt of nearly four lacs of rupees".<sup>26</sup> An inventory of his property made by

<sup>22</sup> *The Englishman and Military Chronicle*, 11 Feb., 1851.

<sup>23</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (9).

<sup>24</sup> Pol. Cons. 6 Nov., 1847 (207).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *The Englishman and Military Chronicle*, 11 Feb., 1851.

the Commissioner showed that sixteen lakhs of rupees were given in five per cent loan to the Government, yielding an annual income of eighty thousand rupees. Besides, there were jewels valued at ten lakhs of rupees, gold ornaments worth eighty thousand, silver plates and ornaments to the value of twenty thousand, and gold mohurs and coins amounting to three lakhs of rupees. Of the gold coins, two-thirds were already spent in payment of debts.<sup>27</sup>

Baji Rao's death immediately raised the question of the allowance to his family. It had a history behind it, and may be traced from the beginning. When Baji Rao surrendered to Malcolm, he was promised a liberal pension "for the support of himself and family". It was clearly a personal allowance, but Baji Rao had hoped that the British Government would make some arrangement for his family, and towards the end of his life was particularly anxious that a provision should be made for Nana Saheb. In December, 1837, Manson informed the Governor-General that Baji Rao was anxious that his two adopted sons should be formally recognised, and the pension, or at least a portion of it, should be continued to them after his death.<sup>28</sup> The Commissioner was instructed to inform the ex-Peshwa that the Government desired "in no way to interfere with any family arrangements" that he might make as to his personal property; but the stipend was "purely personal to himself" and would not descend to his heir either in whole or in part.<sup>29</sup> In 1840, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces directed the Commissioner to inform the claimants that their rights, if any, were "restricted to the private property of the Peshwa", and they would not "inherit any of the dignity of the deceased Peshwa, or any consideration from the Government on the ground of their connection with him."<sup>30</sup> The question was also referred to the Court of Directors but at that time they considered it

<sup>27</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (8, 9).

<sup>28</sup> Pol. Cons. 4 April, 1838 (82).

<sup>29</sup> Pol. Cons. 4 April, 1838 (86).

<sup>30</sup> Pol. Cons. 23 Nov., 1840 (10).

unnecessary "to take into consideration the claim, which the ex-Peshwa urged on behalf of his adopted son". Baji Rao, they pointed out, had "long enjoyed a very large stipend", which "afforded him the means of accumulating an ample patrimony for his heir."<sup>31</sup> Baji Rao had repeatedly pressed the Commissioner for the continuation of the pension after his death. In 1847, Manson wrote to the Governor-General that both Baji Rao and Ramchandra were extremely anxious that "some arrangement should be made" during their lifetime for the maintenance of their families, and regarded the Commissioner "as the channel for obtaining for them the realisation of their wishes."<sup>32</sup> It was also contemplated that Ramchandra's son Narayan Rao should be sent to England for urging the case in person. But the project was given up as the Dewan became "aware of the utter inability of such a measure".<sup>33</sup> They only built their hopes on the favourable impression they might be able to create in the mind of the Governor-General, and through his influence expected a reconsideration of the decision of the Court of Directors.<sup>34</sup>

With the death of the ex-Peshwa, the question of settling a pension on his heir had to be decided. Neither unofficial nor official opinion was unanimous on this point. The stipend which Baji Rao used to get was undoubtedly a personal allowance, but to many it was only fair that Nana Saheb should receive a portion of what his father used to get. With the Indians, Kaye observed, "it was a point of honour to recognise in the son, whether begotten or adopted, the successor to the title of his father. Whether the English recognised him or not, Nana Saheb was still Peshwa in the eyes of every true Maratha."<sup>35</sup> *The Englishman's* correspondent from Cawnpore put in a special plea for some provision for the ex-Peshwa's family. Baji Rao's debts, he

<sup>31</sup> Pol. Cons. 6 Nov., 1847 (207).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Kaye and Malleon, *Sepoy War* iii, p. 483.

wrote, "will swallow up all his property". So it was recommended that "our liberal Government should, in consideration of his station and circumstances and the exemplary good and peaceable life he appears to have led in his retirement at Bithur, enable the surviving members of his family, at least one generation, to maintain their stations in life, and thus in the eyes of the Indian world to enhance their reputation for liberality and justice. . . ." <sup>36</sup> The *Delhi Gazette* of the 5th February came out with an attack on the Government's policy of "outdoor relief to princess in distress". Baji Rao, it observed, "cost the state, which borrows money at 5 p.c. interest, much more than three million sterling for his own support alone". In no other country, it wrote, was such an allowance possible. "When royalty in Europe abdicates or is deposed, it lives on alms" . . . and "native princes who have sat on usurped thrones show no favour to the heirs of former occupants, but either murder or starve them according to rule. The East India Company on the contrary maintain a host of disabled rulers and allow them to renew extinct races by the custom of adoption." In conclusion, it observed that "the sum paid to Baji Rao would have constructed a Ganges Canal or made a Railway from Calcutta to Delhi". <sup>37</sup>

Shortly after the ex-Peshwa's death Manson left Bithur. But in a letter dated the 10th February, he had recommended that a portion of the stipend paid to Baji Rao "might be continued to Nana Sahib subject to a periodical reduction". <sup>38</sup> An application from Nana Saheb was also forwarded to the Government of the North-Western Provinces. In reply, Nana was informed that there was no chance of a provision for him from the Government. <sup>39</sup> Morland who succeeded Manson as the acting Commis-

<sup>36</sup> *The Englishman and Military Chronicle*, 11 Feb., 1851.

<sup>37</sup> *Delhi Gazette*, 5 Feb., 1851, quoted in *The Englishman and Military Chronicle*, 12 Feb., 1851.

<sup>38</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (9).

<sup>39</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (9) enclosure.



sioner shared his views and considered that the most desirable course would be to "make an allowance to the Nana Saheb on express condition" that he would "support all the old retainers of his adoptive father", and pay them such allowances as would "enable them to pass the remainder of their days with comfort". He forwarded a second application from Nana Saheb dated the 29th July, 1851, to the Government of the North-Western Provinces, in which Nana Saheb referred to his former application and described the decision of the Government as "incompatible with its own liberality and magnificence", and prayed for a reconsideration of his case. He pointed out that "after the decease of the chiefs and sirdars of Hindoostan" it had "invariably been a custom of the British Government to continue their possessions or pensions to their heirs and families". To the heirs of the chiefs of Gwalior and Nagpur who were servants of the late Peshwa, the British Government "continued and secured vast possessions". Nana consequently claimed a "greater share of its consideration and liberality". The property left by his father was "quite inadequate to the expense", and Nana considered that any further "reduction in the establishment" would be impossible and would "reflect discredit on the family". He, therefore, prayed that his "solicitation" would meet "with a favourable consideration and that "a provision suited to the rank of the late Maharajah" would be granted to him.<sup>40</sup> In his letter to the Government of the North-Western Provinces the acting Commissioner strongly supported Nana Saheb's case. He hoped that the Government would not depart from the practice of continuing "some pecuniary consideration to the next generation of the incumbent to break the fall, and save the family from distress and penury". Nana Saheb he described as "a quiet unostentatious young man and not at all addicted to any extravagant habits". But his expenses, Morland thought, would never

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



be brought within his income. He had considerably reduced his household expenditure, but there still remained "on his hands a large stud of horses, elephants, camels etc." which could not be disposed of "except by time". He entertained that "feeling of pride common to all natives of rank" that "to sell the animals would be highly derogatory to his character". Morland was informed that Nana had "given some away" and was sure that he would "gladly dispose of others in the same way as opportunities occur", but meanwhile their maintenance was a heavy drain on the treasury. Nana's monthly expenses, Morland considered, were "probably double his income". The acting Commissioner understood that the adopted sons could have "no real claim whatever on the British Government" and never held out any hopes to Nana Saheb, but in consideration of the difficulties in which Nana was placed he hoped that Manson's proposal should be accepted by the Government, and the "family and adherents of the late Bajee Rao" might be "spared the distress and pecuniary difficulties which must follow a refusal of all future assistance."<sup>41</sup>

Thomason who was the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces did not agree with Morland. He considered that the liberal allowance enjoyed by the ex-Peshwa "should have enabled him to make an ample provision for his family". He had "left none but adopted sons", and they, in the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor, had "no claim for further support from Government". The Lieutenant-Governor did not quite believe in the statement of Baji Rao's property furnished by the Commissioner. It was less than what he was generally supposed to have amassed. The accounts of gold and silver coins, according to the Lieutenant-Governor, was "open to some suspicion", as they appeared to have been prepared "simply from the statement of the present heir".<sup>42</sup> The

<sup>41</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (9).

<sup>42</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (8).

Governor-General also agreed with Thomason. The ex-Peshwa had received the "enormous sum of more than two million and a half sterling", and he saw no reason why any provision should be made for his family. He had left "no sons of his own", and others had "no claim whatever on the consideration of the British Government". In Lord Dalhousie's opinion, the income left to them was "sufficient even if it were not ample", and Baji Rao out of his "vast revenue" ought "to have made it so". Dalhousie also shared the Lieutenant-Governor's suspicion that the property left was "in reality much larger" than it was "avowed to be". The suggestion of the acting Commissioner appeared to him "uncalled-for and unreasonable". Consequently, the Governor-General did not agree that "any portion of the public revenues" should be conferred on the family. He requested the Lieutenant-Governor that the "determination of the Government of India" might be "explicitly declared to the family without delay".<sup>43</sup>

The Governor-General's decision was the subject of some criticism. Kaye, who had examined the official papers, was clearly in sympathy with Nana and described the Court of Directors as "hard as a rock."<sup>44</sup> Arnold, who wrote a few years after Kaye, considered Dalhousie's measure as inexpedient and referred to its "horrible moral."<sup>45</sup> Dalhousie had his supporters as well. Hunter found it difficult to agree with Kaye's point of view,<sup>46</sup> while Lee Warner completely believed in the wisdom of the Governor-General's decision, and considered Nana Saheb's "subsequent misuse of his resources" a justification for it.<sup>47</sup> It would not be proper to apply to this measure the principles which prompted Dalhousie to adopt the doctrine of lapse. It was purely the end of a contract by death.

<sup>43</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (11).

<sup>44</sup> Kaye, *Sepoy War* i, p. 108.

<sup>45</sup> Arnold, *Dalhousie's Administration of British India* ii, pp. 127-28.

<sup>46</sup> Hunter, *Lord Dalhousie*, p. 162.

<sup>47</sup> Lee Warner, *The Marquis of Dalhousie* ii, p. 144.

The paltry jagir at Bithur was not a sovereign state, and Lord Dalhousie "in a plain coat" was not adding "more millions of men to the Empire than any one" of his "predecessors in epaulets". The Governor-General was very much influenced in his decision by two considerations, the fact that Nana Saheb was an adopted son, and the belief that the late Peshwa had left a sufficient fortune for the maintenance of his family. In his memorial to the Court of Directors in December, 1852, Nana Saheb attempted to reply to both these points. He tried to show that adoption was a "fundamental feature" in Hindu religion and law, and that it had been always recognised by the British Government. Secondly, he argued that it was "immaterial to the British Government" what portion of his pension "the late prince actually expended", nor had "there been any agreement entered into the effect that His Highness . . . . should be compelled to expend every fraction of an annual allowance. . . . Nobody on earth had a right to control the expenditure of that pension, and if His Highness . . . had saved every fraction of it, he would have been perfectly justified in doing so." Nana Saheb then asked whether the British Government "ever deigned to ask in what manner the pension granted to any of its numerous retired servants" was "expended", or "whether any of them saves a portion, or what portion of his pension."<sup>48</sup> The result of this memorial is well-known. The reason for turning it down was mainly financial. It was felt that the late Peshwa had lived an unusually long life, and when at last he died, Dalhousie had a chance of putting an end to a regular drain on the public revenue.

It remains now to wind up the story of Bithur. On the 11th December, 1839, Baji Rao had prepared the draft of a will, in which he named Nana Saheb as "master and heir to the Guddee of the Peshwa", and to the whole of his property. It was signed later, on the 30th April, 1841,

<sup>48</sup> Kaye, *Sepoy War* i, pp. 106-07.

and witnessed among others by Manson, Ramchandra Pant, and Ramchandra's son Narayan Rao.<sup>49</sup> After Baji Rao's death, the lady who called herself Yasoda Bai produced a second will, and made an application to the Supreme Court that probate might not be granted to Nana Saheb. But her story was not believed. The Government had "little doubt" that the will she produced was a forgery.<sup>50</sup>

A few words may be added about Ramchandra. When the Peshwa died, the Subedar was an old man of seventy-five. During his master's lifetime he received an annual grant of one lakh of rupees from him, besides the usual allowance of twelve thousand rupees annually from the Government, and three thousand rupees as revenue from the two villages granted to him in 1825. Baji Rao's death put an end to the greater portion of his income, and his pension from the Government was to continue only during his lifetime. Ramchandra Pant was naturally anxious to provide for his children, and made repeated attempts to get back the revenue of nine villages, which he claimed had been granted to his son Ganesh by Bapu Gokhale. In June, 1828, the question was referred to the Governor-General-in-Council by the Bombay Government. It was recalled that of the villages, only one was held by Gokhale himself, while the rest were farmed out to Ramchandra's son. The villages were actually held by him but his name was not inserted in the *sanad*. While reopening the question, the Government of Bombay observed that "the services of the Subedar" had already been "rewarded", and "the Governor-General-in-Council was to determine how far it was wise or expedient to grant the further indulgence now prayed for, either as a reward for the past or to stimulate his future conduct".<sup>51</sup> A few months later, John Low paid a short visit to Bithur, and was "fiercely

<sup>49</sup> Pol. Cons. 18 July, 1851 (260) enclosure; For. Cons. 26 Feb., 1858 (165-70); Kaye, *Sepoy War* i, p. 101.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> For. Cons. 24 Sept., 1852 (158) enclosure.

attacked regarding many little grievances" of the ex-Peshwa. Early in 1829, he wrote to Sir John Malcolm, Governor of Bombay, strongly supporting Ramchandra's claims to the nine villages. He explained that the former decision of the Government was due to a misunderstanding, and "but for a mistake of poor Johnson's, the Subedar's son would have been confirmed in these nine villages". At Johnson's request, the Subedar had deferred urging his claims, and later on he found it impossible to establish them. Consequently, Ramchandra's family was "likely to be sadly reduced in circumstances". Low also referred to the loss of Ramchandra's influence with Baji Rao. He had persuaded his master to subscribe six lakhs of rupees to Government loans in 1825, and three lakhs more during Johnson's term of office. Baji Rao was sorry to part with so much money. Lord Amherst's refusal to see him, during his tour in the Upper Provinces, had added to Baji Rao's mortification. He considered Ramchandra responsible for the loss of his money, and would have liked to get rid of him. It is interesting to find in Low's letter picture of the ex-Peshwa complaining bitterly that he had not been properly treated, that he had never received "a khilat or a line from the Governor-General", and glancing "in a reproachful manner towards Ramchandra".<sup>52</sup>

Low's letter apparently did not produce the desired result. In December, 1837, Ramchandra had an interview with Lord Auckland at Cawnpore, and secured the Governor-General's permission to present his case, but the Commissioner did not forward his claims, and nothing was achieved.<sup>53</sup> In 1843, his petition was at last presented to Lord Ellenborough, who forwarded it to the Court of Directors for their "consideration and orders". Their reply was in the negative.<sup>54</sup> After Baji Rao's death, Ramchandra made his last attempt. On the 31st August, 1852, he petitioned the Government praying that he might be put in

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> For. Cons. 24 Sept., 1852 (158).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



possession of the nine villages. The Governor-General, however, found no reason to alter the previous decision. Ramchandra was informed that his prayer for the restoration of the villages formerly held by his son, could not be complied with.<sup>55</sup>

The establishment at Bithur was speedily dissolved. A letter from the Government of the North-Western Provinces to the officiating Commissioner dated the 3rd October, 1851, outlined the measures that were to be followed. The office of the Commissioner was abolished. But as magistrate and collector of Cawnpore, Morland retained the powers exercised by the Commissioner till the final adjustment of Baji Rao's affairs. He was directed "to dissolve the entire establishment connected with the late Commission" before the end of October. Khemdeb Rao the treasurer, and Ashik Ali the munshi, were granted six months' pay each. Martindale the English writer, who was absorbed in the magistrate's office at Cawnpore, was granted a personal allowance of twenty-five rupees. It was considered unnecessary to maintain sepoys at Bithur any longer, and the acting Commissioner was instructed to settle the precise time when they should return to the cantonments. There were a few articles attached to the Commission for use on ceremonial occasions, such as, one silver-mounted umbrella, two *chobs*, two *sontahs*, one silver *pandan*, one *attardan* and one *golabpash*. They were directed to be sent to the Lieutenant-Governor's office at Agra.<sup>56</sup>

With regard to the jagir granted to the ex-Peshwa, Morland had recommended that Nana Saheb might be permitted to retain the plot of land during his life rent-free, but the privileges granted by Regulation I of 1832 should be withdrawn.<sup>57</sup> The Lieutenant-Governor agreed with him, provided Nana Saheb continued to reside there. The land was to remain rent-free during his life, but all

<sup>55</sup> For. Cons. 24 Sept., 1852 (158) enclosure.

<sup>56</sup> Pol. Cons. 17 Oct., 1851 (10) ; 3 Oct., 1851 (9).

<sup>57</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (9).



residents were to be "made amenable to the general laws of the country".<sup>58</sup> With this view an act was passed on the 6th February, 1852. The Act IX of 1852, as it was called, laid down in its preamble that on account of the death of Maharaja Baji Rao, it was deemed expedient to repeal the old regulation, and enacted the following changes. Regulation I of 1832 was repealed. The laws and regulations in force at Cawnpore were also to be applied to the plot of land within the jagir. All cases within the jagir, when the cause of action arose *before* the passing of the act, should be "tried and determined" by courts in the district of Cawnpore, and the laws and regulations in force in the district might be applied in the trial and determination of such cases. But when they would operate unjustly, the courts might try according to equity and good conscience. Cases which had been finally decided in the jagir before Baji Rao's death, would not be reopened.<sup>59</sup>

Kaye has referred to the "fidelity of the ex-Peshwa" and "the good conduct and the orderly behaviour of his people".<sup>60</sup> There had been occasions when the Commissioner had "much cause for apprehending a spirit of intrigue. . . . developing itself in the Maharajah" through the intrigues of his companions, but on the whole he gave the Government little cause for anxiety. The ex-Peshwa had always wanted to improve his condition and had been generally anxious to create a favourable impression on the Government. Manson made particular mention to the Governor-General, in 1847, of Baji Rao's loan of five lakhs of rupees to the Company, and of his offer to "raise and pay a body of one thousand sowers and the same number of foot soldiers" during the Sikh War.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, Baji Rao allowed himself to be made use of by other people, and was implicated in

<sup>58</sup> Pol. Cons. 3 Oct., 1851 (8).

<sup>59</sup> Theobald, *The Acts of the Legislative Councils of India*.

<sup>60</sup> Kaye, *Sepoy War* i, p. 100.

<sup>61</sup> Pol. Cons. 6 Nov., 1847 (207).

some intrigues. But even in conspiracies he always lacked initiative, and was very often a creature of circumstances. In his younger days he had hardly proved to be a leader of men, and his life in confinement was not likely to bring about any change in his character. The last thirty-three years he passed in a backwater, cut off from the political issues of his time. When he first began his life in exile, the East India Company had become the dominant power in India, and when he died it was the only power that remained.

## APPENDIX

### BAJI RAO'S WILL

(For. Cons. 26 Feb., 1858, 165-70)

Sree Raja Shahoo  
Nurputtee Hursh  
Nidhan Bajee Rao  
Ruggonath, Mookh  
Purdhan

This document to have effect for ever Sircar Sreemunt Maharaj Rajasree Bajee Rao Rugonath Punt Purdhan in the year Urbyne Myahlyne nob aluf Saikeh 1761 Nekaree [?] Ram Summutcher according with the year 1839 Christian Era may it be known to Sircar Dowlut Mudan Englistan and the Sircar the Honble the East India Company and to all. That Chirrunjib Rajasree Dhoondoo Punt Nana my eldest son and Chirrunjib Rajasree Gungodhur Rao my third and youngest son and my grandson Chirrunjib Rajasree Pandoorung Rao son of the late Sadasheew Punt Dada my second son are my only children. After me Dhoondoo Punt Nana my said eldest son Mookh Purdhan is master and heir to the Guddee (station) of the Paishwa as also of the Raj (country) this side wealth Deshmookhee &ca Watun Treasure and whole of my property and his children and heirs from generation to generation of the station of the Paishwa and the Raj together with the wealth and property as aforesaid he is to be the sole possessor and will exercise sole control over them and Dhoondoo Punt and his children and heirs are to give due and brotherly support according to custom to his younger brother Gungadhar Rao and his nephew Pandorung Rao Sadasheew and to their children and heirs; as also to support the servants and protect the Ryots in a just and equitable manner and Gungadhar Rao and Pandorung Rao are to conduct themselves as it becometh them and the servants and the Ryots are to obey and faithfully serve him. In

the event of my having hereafter a son of my own body he is then as aforesaid, to be a Mookh Purdhan and heir to the Guddee of the Paishwa together with the Raj this side, the wealth, Deshmookhee &ct Watun treasure and all my property and his children and heirs from generation to generation will be the sole master thereof. He and his children and heirs are to support his brothers, and to afford just support and protection to the servants and the Ryots—Dhoondoo Punt Nana and all the members of the family are to obey him. This document has been executed with the free will of the Huzzoor dated 4th Shuwal Mittee Murgsir Soodu 5th according with 11th December.

Laikhun  
Simma

Witnesses

Sd/- Ram Chunder Punt  
Soobadar

This document has been written under my superintendence and Sreemunt Maharaj Rajasree Punt Purdhan Swamee, has with his own hand written the Finale and the seals, sicca and Moortub have been affixed in my presence this 30th day of April 1841 at Bithoor.

Sigd/- Narain Rao  
Ramchunder

On this document Sreemunt Maharaj Rajasree Punt Purdhan Swamee has with his own hand written the Finale of the Sicca and the Moortub seals affixed in my presence, d/30th April 1841 at Bithoor.

Signed and sealed by His Highness Bajee Rao in my presence at Bithoor this thirtieth day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight Hundred and Forty one.

Sd/- J. Manson.  
Commr.

On this document Sreemunt Maharaj Rajasree Punt  
Purdhan Swamee has with his own hand written the  
Finale and affixed the seals sicca & Moortub in our pre-  
sence d/30th April 1841 at Bithoor.

Sd/- Bapoojee Succaram Goorboolay  
,, Venain Bullal Gogleh  
,, Ram Chunder Gunesh Bhareh.

True translation  
Sd/- J. Manson.  
Commr.

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# INDEX

- Abaji, 51  
 Act IX of 1852, 103  
 Adam, 2, 76  
 Agra, 102  
 Ajmere, 2  
 Allahabad, 11, 32, 33, 40, 41  
 Amherest, Lady, 33  
 Amherst, Lord, 8, 11, 12, 31-33, 42-44, 75, 77, 78, 89, 90, 101  
 Amrit Rao, 30  
 Anand Rao, 49  
 Ana Saab, 90  
 Anna Desmukh, 4, 7, 8, 11, 68, 91  
 Appa Saheb of Nagpur, 58  
 Arnold, 98  
 Ashik Ali, 18, 102  
 Ashti, 34, 49, 57  
 Asiatic Society of Bengal, 53  
 Auckland, Lord, 20, 21, 58, 60, 61, 63-66, 93, 101  
 Aurangabad, 31, 32  
  
 Bacon, 13, 34, 35  
 Baji Rao, 1; goes to Bithur, 2-5; 6-21; Baji Rao and Low, 22-4; 25, 26, 30, 31; Baji Rao and Amherst, 32-33; 34, 39-41; khilat, 42-45, 47; conspiracies, 48-66; 68-79; jurisdiction, 80-86; 87, 88; death, 89; wives and children, 89-91; property, 92-93; pension to heir, 93-99; 101-3.  
 Bala Saheb, 91  
 Balaji Krishna, 91  
 Baloba Baba, 7, 8, 11  
 Bapu Godebole, 7, 8, 11, 59, 65  
 Bapu Gokhale, 49, 100  
 Bareilly, 54  
 Benares, 1-3, 11, 12, 40, 52, 59, 62, 88, 89  
 Bengal Regulation I of 1832, 80-86, 102, 103  
 Bengaon, 91  
  
 Bentinck, Lord, 10, 14-17, 19-21, 39-42, 45, 48, 49, 54, 56, 57, 61, 76, 79, 81-83, 85  
 Bharatpore, 36, 54  
 Bhikaji Pant, 7, 8, 11, 91  
 Birch, 53  
 Bithur, 3-8, 10-14, 16, 18, 20-27, 29, 30, 33-39, 41-43, 47-49, 59, 61-64, 68-71, 75, 78-81, 84, 87, 89-92, 95, 99, 100, 102.  
 Blacker, Captain, 12, 13, 19, 21, 25, 26, 29, 73, 74.  
 Bombay, 23, 24, 27-29, 33, 34, 51, 100  
 Browne, 24  
 Bundelkhand, 2  
 Burma, 52, 62  
  
 Calcutta, 4, 27, 29, 41, 43, 46, 52, 61-63, 68, 72, 77, 95  
 Caldecott, 47.  
 Cape of Good Hope, 28.  
 Carnatic, 8  
 Caulfield, 61-63  
 Cawnpore, 4, 5, 12-16, 32-36, 38, 39, 42, 44, 46-48, 54, 61, 70, 71, 76, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 86, 88, 92, 94, 102, 103  
 Chaplin, 22, 24-27  
 Check, 89  
 Chimnaji Appa (1), 50-52  
 Chimnaji Appa (2), 91  
 Chitle, 90  
 Combermere, Lady, 36  
 Combermere, Lord, 36, 54  
 Comyn, 54  
 Cooke, William Percy, 12-14, 16, 17, 19, 36-42, 44-46, 79.  
  
 Da Costa, 14  
 Dalhousie, Lord, 98-100, 102  
 Delhi, 2, 4, 95  
*Delhi Gazette*, 95.  
 Dhondo Pant, *See* Nana Saheb  
 Directors, Board of, 55.

Directors, Court of, 94, 98, 99.  
101

Duff Grant, 34, 58  
Dumderry, 90

Ellenborough, Lord, 101  
Elphinstone, 11, 23, 29, 51, 58.  
*Englishman*, 94

Faithful, 13, 16, 39, 46, 49, 79.  
87  
Fategarh, 30.  
Fitzgerald, 38

Gaekwar, 31  
Ganga Bai, 90  
Gangadhar Rao, *See* Bala Saheb  
Ganesh Pant, 100-102  
Ganges, 4, 53, 60 80  
Ganges Canal, 95  
Ganpat Rao, 89  
Gaya, 11  
Govind Rao, 65  
Govind Rao Mehendele, 51  
Gorakhpur, 3  
Grote, 12  
Gwalior, 23, 24, 59, 96  
Gurkha War, 54

Hari Bhau Desmukh, 90  
Harriet, 57  
Hastings, Lord, 2-6, 19, 22,  
26, 27, 68, 69, 73, 74, 76  
Hearsey, 53-57  
Heber, Bishop, 5  
Hodgson, 63  
Holkar, 24, 31, 50  
Hopkins, 53  
Hunter, 98  
Hyderabad, 61

Indore, 51  
Irwin, 13, 14, 35, 36

Jaipur, 18, 29  
Janardan Narayan Deshpande, 59  
Johnson, 10, 12, 13, 17, 29-36,  
38, 42-45, 48, 74, 75, 77, 78,  
90, 101

Jumna, 4, 59

Kareli, 53  
Katmandu, 63, 64  
Kaye, 22, 94, 98, 103  
Khemdeb Rao, 102  
Kirki, 1  
Krishna Datta, 48  
Kusa Bai, 90  
Kusuma Bai, 91

Lake, Lord, 53  
Lakshman Pant, 48  
Lee Warner, 98  
Low, John, 2-5, 7-13, 18, 19, 21,  
22, 24, 25, 27-30, 33, 36,  
68-73, 75-77, 79, 80, 100, 101  
Low, Ursula, 28  
Low, William, 13  
Lucknow, 49, 61-63, 79

MacCarty, 14  
Mackinnon, 89  
Macnaghten, 61  
Mackenzie Mrs., 58  
Madhav Rao Narayan Bhat, 91  
Madras Army, 22  
Madras Native Infantry, 22  
Mahidpur, 24  
Maina Bai, 90, 91  
Mainpuri, 30  
Mandhana, 80  
Malcolm, 1-3, 6, 20, 22, 41, 55,  
56, 68, 76, 87, 93, 101  
Malwa, 6  
Manikchand, 41  
Mansarowara, Lake, 53  
Manson, James, 10-13, 16-18, 36,  
46-52, 54-56, 58-66, 76, 81-89,  
92-95, 97, 100, 103.  
Maratha War, 36, 53  
Martindale, 14, 102  
Matheran, 91  
Mathura, 3, 11, 30  
Matia Bai, 91  
Mauritius, 28  
Meerut, 36  
Metcalf, 70  
Mirzapur, 12

- Monghyr, 3  
 Moorcroft, 53  
 Morland, 13, 95-98, 102  
 Mosley, 14, 49  
 Muraji, 51  
  
 Nabakishan Mitra, 14  
 Nagpur, 58, 96  
 Nana Fadnavis, 50  
 Nana Saheb, 90-100, 102  
 Napoleon, 28  
 Narmada, 2  
 Narayan Rao, 94, 100  
 Naro Pant Apte, 23, 24  
 Nepal, 52, 62, 63, 91  
 Nepal War, 36.  
 Nizammat Adalat, 72  
  
 Oldfield, 13, 35  
 Oudh, 59, 60  
 Oudh, Nawab of, 53, 57  
  
 Pandurang Rao, 91  
 Parashuram Bania, 62  
 Parashuram Pant, 90  
*Partridge*, 27, 28  
 Patna, 12  
 Pratap Singh, 57-59  
 Perron, 53  
 Piraji Raja, 60  
 Poona, 1, 21, 24-26, 29, 32, 48, 50,  
     32, 55, 60, 90.  
  
 Raghunath Rao, 62  
 Raghunath Rao Vinchurkar, 88  
 Raigarh, 50-52  
 Rajendra Vikram Shah, 62  
 Ramchandra Pant Subedar, 4,  
     7-11, 15, 19, 23, 32, 34, 37,  
     43, 48-50, 54-56, 59-61, 65, 66,  
     68, 76, 82, 84, 94, 100-102  
 Ramdin, 33, 34  
 Rampura, 24  
 Robertson, 70-73, 77, 79  
 Rohilkhand, 53  
 Rohillas, 6, 54  
 Romel, 80  
 Roshan Beg, 24  
  
 Roshan Khan, 24  
  
 Sadar Dewani Adalat, 75  
 Sadashiv Rao, Dada Saheb, 90,  
     91  
 Sai Bai, 90, 91  
 Sakharam Pant, 83-85  
 Salpa, 8  
 Saraswati Bai, 89  
 Satara, 57, 58  
 Satyabhama Bai, 90  
 Savai Madhav Rao, 50, 51  
 Shapur, 3  
 Shankar Acharyya, 39  
 Shesha Shastri, 39, 40  
 Shivaji, 57  
 Sikh War, 103  
 Simla, 45  
 Sindhia, 31, 53  
 Sringari, 39  
 Srinivas Rao, 61-64  
 St. Helena, 27, 28  
 Stewart, 23, 24  
 Stirling, 44  
 Strachey, 58  
 Surat, 40-42  
 Swinton, George, 77  
  
 Thomas, 53  
 Thomason, 97, 98  
 Thompson, 13, 46, 79.  
 Tibet, 53  
 Tulsiram Mayaram, 40, 41  
  
 Ubhayankar, 90  
  
 Vaman Rao, 90  
 Varanasi Bai, 41, 89, 90  
 Vishnu Pandit, 48  
  
 Wellesley, Lord, 53, 56  
 West, Edward, 90  
 West, Lady, 90  
 Wimys, 79.  
  
 Yoga Bai, 91  
 Yamuna Bai, 49, 50  
 Yasoda Bai, 50-52, 100